

Social Networks and Voting:
Social Approval, Small World Networks and Social Citizens
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Researched and Written By
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About the Author

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Executive Summary

This study aimed to explore what effect social networks have on whether or not an individual decides to vote. An in-depth review of the academic literature on social networks and voting behavior was conducted in order to better understand this topic. The review found that social networks help spread voting due to a contagion effect. In other words, social network influence serves to create a social norm around voting. As a result, individuals in a network adhere to norms in order to maintain their reputation and gain social approval from those with whom they interact. The literature also provided evidence that the types of ties within a network and the network itself are directly related to whether the act of one individual voting is likely to influence others.

Three hypotheses were explored to discover how social influence can increase individual voter likelihood, what type of network is most conducive for encouraging voting, and how the “social citizen” is key to leveraging this network to create a voting contagion effect. A mix of qualitative and quantitative research was performed in order to test these hypotheses including focus groups, an online survey and expert interviews. The initial focus group data was both used to gather important insight into voter behaviors and to help construct the more narrowly focused quantitative survey, which further explored voter motivations and their interaction with and influence from social networks. Expert interviews supplemented this data by providing insight into the efforts of those currently working to encourage the individual voter to come out on Election Day.

The data provides evidence a social network’s ability to create social expectations for the individual is a central component in encouraging individuals to vote. While many voter outreach experts may believe other factors are more salient in voter turnout, upon closer inspection their tactics suggest an implicit understanding of the value of social influence in their work. In addition, there is strong evidence small world networks consisting of strong ties, like friends and family, may be the most effective for increasing an individual’s voter likelihood. Intimate influencers or “social citizens” are key to truly leveraging these networks.

The hypotheses supporting evidence, coupled with unforeseen results related to how best to disseminate information and combat the challenge of the uninformed voter, enable the author of this paper to provide a framework for addressing low voter turnout in America.

Introduction and Background

Voter participation in the democratic process is key to a fully functioning democracy. 2014 saw the lowest national voter turnout in the United States since World War II (Delreal, 2014). There are many theories to why this happened, but one thing is clear, something needs to be done to address the disturbing reality of low voter turnout. During a time when there are numerous public policy decisions needing to be made (i.e. how to address urgent issues like climate change and a rising national debt) and a large portion of the population is uninvolved in electoral politics, especially during non-presidential elections, understanding what motivates individuals to exercise their right to vote is more important than ever. While a great deal of research has been conducted in an attempt to address the crisis of low voter participation, ongoing efforts are necessary to engage voters.

Candidates, political consulting firms, and outside groups spend billions of dollars on political campaigns each year in an attempt to encourage citizens to exercise their right to vote on behalf of their preferred candidate or position (Election to Cost Nearly \$4 Billion, 2014). Unfortunately, all of this money has been unable to significantly increase the number of citizens who come out to vote in every election. With this in mind, it would benefit not only those running for office, but the integrity of modern democracies to see more research conducted in the area of voter turnout.

Considering a great deal of research has been dedicated to social networks and their influence on human decision-making, and the act of voting is ultimately a decision, research into how social networks affect voter turnout is vital in determining how to increase future turnout. The following literature review and accompanying research will explore how social

networks contribute to voter turnout. While some attention will be paid to voter choice, the focus of this paper is to address the question of how social networks interact with an individual's decision whether or not to vote in a given election.

Literature Review

This literature review will address two questions vital to understanding the interaction between social networks and individual voter turnout.

- How do social networks encourage individuals to vote?
- Are certain social networks more conducive for encouraging voting behavior than others?

Social Networks and the Contagious Nature of Voting

A contagion effect within social networks is one way social networks are said to encourage individuals to vote. According to a study regarding voting in two-person households, one person's decision to vote may have the effect of increasing the likelihood the other person in the household might vote (Nickerson, 2008). In fact,

Both experiments find that 60% of the propensity to vote is passed onto the other member of the household. This finding suggests a mechanism by which civic participation norms are adopted and couples grow more similar over time. (Nickerson, 2008, p. 49)

This finding shows, at least on the most basic level of social networks (the dyad), social networks can serve as conduit for the duplication of civic behaviors. If the concept of social networks as a means for creating an environment for contagious voting behaviors was limited

to this study, it may be difficult to make a case for this concept. Fortunately, research has been conducted in this area on a larger scale.

In Fowler's *Turnout in a Small World*, the idea of "turnout cascades" is introduced as a way voter turnout increases in moderately sized social networks. (Fowler, 2005) Utilizing data from Huckfeldt and Sprague's 1984 South Bend and 1996 Indianapolis-St. Louis election surveys, Fowler concludes, "...that a citizen can expect to change the turnout decision of about 3 other people with her own turnout decision" (Fowler, 2005, p. 281). If we consider that each one of those people then change 3 more individuals' turnout decisions, it is clear turnout cascades are a powerful means for increasing voter turnout. This further illustrates the idea social networks serve as vessels for voter participation to spread from one person to another. This case, unlike Nickerson's, expands the idea of voting as a contagious behavior to social networks larger than the basic dyad.

In his study on indirect voter mobilization, McClurg not only found evidence for the existence of the voter contagion, but its usefulness in encouraging voting behavior. He proposes a voter contagion hypothesis:

A behavioral contagion effect implies that party contact indirectly stimulates participation by changing the behavior of the person originally contacted, with a likely explanation being that respondents who have been contacted are more likely to participate and that their family or friends participate at the same time, in the same activities. (McClurg, 2004, p. 421)

The belief political campaigns should contact voters in order to encourage them to vote is nothing new. However, the idea that a secondary purpose of electoral voter outreach is to encourage a contagion effect within these networks provides an interesting and applicable example of how social networks can interact with individual voting decisions and turnout.

Social Approval and Increased Voting Behavior

Once the premise of the voting contagion is accepted, we must explore why such a phenomenon occurs. In his study on ego-centric voting networks, David Knoke provides an answer to this question. Knoke finds “when people interact extensively with others, they mutually create normative expectations that influence one another’s political thoughts and deeds” (Knoke, 1990, p. 1059). Social approval is an important facet of an individual’s decision-making process when considering whether or not to vote. The suggestion these norms are mutual places an important emphasis on not just the social network’s influence on the individual, but the individual’s effect on the social network.

In their study on informal social networks and rational voting, Abrams, Iverson and Soskice (2011) not only support Knoke’s assertion, but take it one step further by placing increased importance on the influence of informal social networks on determining individual voter behavior. Their “claim is that a significant proportion of turnout can be explained by voters conforming to the expectations of the informal social networks (ISNs) – of family, friends, work colleagues and perhaps neighbours – of which they are part” (Abrams et. al., 2011, p.229). By comparing this to other factors typically used to explain voter turnout (education level, income level, etc.) using data from a 2004 *YouGov* survey, they make the case

that not only are social influences and approval found in social networks an explanation for individual voter turnout, but that they are the most important factor.

In the article *Voting, Rationality, and Reputation*, Bufacchi further emphasizes the importance of social approval in social networks to voting by using this concept as an explanation for why voting can be considered a rational behavior. He argues there is an inherent paradox in voting: “the costs of voting are tangible, and the rewards of voting to the individual voter – based on the likelihood that his or her single vote will in fact swing the results of an election one way or the other- are infinitesimally minute, practically zero...” (Bufacchi, 2001, p. 715). Bufacchi presents two concepts of reputation to address this seemingly rational lack of incentive to vote: reputation of trust (building one’s personal reputation) and reputation of power (using reputation to exert power over others) (Bufacchi, 2001). The interplay of these two types of reputation within social networks serves as another justification for individuals to vote, further supporting the idea social approval is a central tenet of whether or not an individual participates in the electoral process.

In their 2014 article *Why We Vote*, Gerber, Huber, Doherty, and Dowling find further evidence of reputation and social approval serving as a central catalyst for voter behavior. Through a series of experimental surveys conducted in 2009 and analysis of the 2000 National Annenberg Election Survey, they find evidence suggesting “that individuals may be motivated to vote because they anticipate that the failure to do so will be viewed as undesirable – either because others value the specific act of voting or because they see a failure to vote as a signal of broader personal deficiencies” (Gerber, et al., 2014, p. 20). This study not only reinforces the idea reputation and social approval have an effect on whether someone decides to vote with

timely data, but also provides evidence people make judgments of others based on whether or not they vote. This submits it may not only be important to focus on how voters respond to social influence, but how that social influence arises.

Fortunately Abrams, Iversen, and Soskice provide an explanation for this as well.

“Discussion of politics and group turnout lead individuals to believe that it is important to know about politics and to vote, and this in turn predicts whether people actually vote.” (Abrams et al, 2011, p. 256). The view that dialogue within social networks has a positive effect on the likelihood of voter turnout is at the core of the academic study of social networks and political participation. As McClurg (2004) discusses in his study of indirect voter mobilization, the key to utilizing social networks to promote voting may lie within the ability of campaigns and individuals to stimulate conversations around voting.

Social Network Types: The Strength of Ties

When considering social network influence on individual voting choice, it is important to consider the different types of social networks that exist. In the article *The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited*, Granovetter discusses two types of social networks—low density networks (those made up of the individual and his weak ties) and densely knit networks (those made up of the individual and his strong ties) (Granovetter, 1983). In his original theory Granovetter explores how weak ties and strong ties both have a role to play in how individuals make decisions and gather information. (Granovetter, 1973). As the following literature shows, the types of social networks and strength of the ties within them have different, but important roles to play in the realm of individual voter turnout within the context of social networks.

There is conflicting research on whether strong or weak ties are more effective at increasing voting turnout. As was mentioned earlier, Abrams, Ivers and Soskice assert that deciding to vote results from conversations with family, friends, and co-workers; people normally seen as “strong ties” within networks (Abrams et al., 2011). However, in *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, Putnam claims “bridging” interactions with people from different social backgrounds are more conducive for gathering political information than “bonding” interactions with people from similar backgrounds. (Putnam, 2000). While Putnam may not specifically call out the ill effects of strong ties on voting, he argues weaker ties may be more effective for the type of information exchange required to instill the importance of voting in an individual. If we take these opposing assessments into consideration, the next question becomes how to resolve these seemingly contrasting points of view.

Siegel, in his article *Social Networks and Collective Action*, offers an explanation that seems to favor Abram’s, Iversen’s, and Soskice’s point of view:

One, the relationship between network size and aggregate participation is conditional on the distribution of individual motivations in the population, as well as on network structure. People who have intrinsically low motivations and thus need more urging to participate can be discouraged by an excess of network connections, particularly if these ties are “weak” in the sense of Granovetter (1973). Besides illustrating the conditional nature of weak ties, this suggests that increasing network size will have different effects in different varieties of participation. When participation requires little urging, size should be positively correlated to aggregate participation regardless of the structure of the

network. When it is very costly, however, size is likely to have more mixed, network-dependent effects. (Siegel, 2009, p.123)

This explanation asserts whether weak or strong ties have an effect on various forms of participation is conditional on a number of factors, most notably the level of intrinsic motivation within the individual. If one considers voting is relatively high-cost (Gerber et al, 2014) because of the time required to research elections and travel to the polls and that, it may be safe to assume, those who do not vote are probably not highly motivated to do so, it would appear the type of network may play a larger role than the strength of ties in mobilizing those populations who traditionally choose not to vote. This issue is addressed in the next section of this literature review.

Related to the topic of network ties is the effect of the diversity of ties within a network on the act of electoral political participation. In the essay *Friends and Politics: Linking Diverse Friendship Networks to Political Participation*, Kotler-Berkowitz found that “people with more diverse friendship networks engage in more non-electoral political acts than people with a less diverse set of friends” (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2005, p.153). Furthermore, Kotler-Berkowitz states “diverse friends, defined as friendships across multiple group boundaries, are positively related to higher levels of political participation” (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2005). While this finding may not translate to the electoral type of political participation encapsulated by voting, it does show evidence having a diversity of friends spanning multiple networks may encourage higher political participation. At the very least, it provides at least some justification for exploring whether the positive effect of diversity in social networks translates to electoral participation.

Small World Networks and Voting

Now it has been established the types of ties within a social network are important for determining voter turnout, it is important to explore what types of networks are most conducive for communications that will not only encourage individuals to vote, but lead to the voter contagion mentioned earlier. In the aforementioned *Social Networks and Collective Action*, Siegel addresses this very question when addressing the small world network (those consisting of a “high concentration of shared interests” (Fowler, 2005, p. 284) or in other words those networks with close-knit cliques connected by individuals who serve as intermediaries) composition. He finds “this network efficiently induces high levels of participation, which spreads quickly via a combination of strong and weak ties” (Siegel, 2009, p. 136). The idea high participation is encouraged by small world networks suggests harnessing these types of networks may be the key to increasing voter turnout.

In his aforementioned essay, *Turnout in a Small World*, Fowler applies this concept specifically to the idea of voter turnout. He concludes “the high concentration of shared interests in social networks may magnify the incentive to participate” (Fowler, 2005, p. 284). Furthermore, Fowler posits “the model also suggests that there is a power law relationship between turnout cascades and the average distance between any two individuals in the network: as the world gets smaller, the capacity to influence others increases exponentially and so should the incentive to participate” (Fowler, p. 287). Fowler’s findings, along with the earlier discussion on the effect of turnout cascades on elections, suggests tapping into small world social networks may have long lasting and positive effects in voter turnout. However, once we

recognize the importance of creating this social norm within these smaller social networks, the next question becomes “how?”

The Role of Opinion Leaders in Encouraging Social Network Norms

In order to encourage voting in the small world networks that are both becoming more common in today’s fragmented society, and are ripe for increasing participation, it may be worth considering utilizing influencers. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (with later expansion by Katz) introduced the idea of influencers in their hypothesis on two-step communication, which posits: “influences stemming from the mass media first reach ‘opinion leaders’ who, in turn, pass on what they read and hear to those of their every-day associates for whom they are influential” (Katz, 1957; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). In a later test of this hypothesis, Katz expanded on this relatively simplistic relationship where he found,

.....interpersonal relations are (1) channels of information, (2) sources of social pressure, and (3), sources of social support, and each relates to interpersonal relations to decision-making in a somewhat different way. (Katz, 1957, p. 77)

The two-step flow of communication and its focus on influencers provides a potential path for influencing the activities within social networks. Furthermore, the idea interpersonal relations, and by extension, influencers, serve both as channels of information and sources of social pressure, combined with the earlier understanding of social approval and turnout cascades, provides a clear example of how social networks can further promote pro-voting behaviors.

In her book, *The Social Citizen: Peer Networks and Political Behavior*, Betsy Sinclair suggests the ideal influencer for increasing voting behavior. This influencer is known as the “social citizen”. This person “is a public citizen located in a social network, whose voiced social political norms of sincere civic expression lead to collective civic action” (Sinclair, 2012, p. 149). Utilizing two randomized field experiments, the author finds direct evidence that once a “social citizen” observes a social norm like voting, the network they are found in will observe that norm. (Sinclair, 2012). Combining the concept of the “social citizen” with Fowler’s aforementioned emphasis on small world networks (Fowler, 2006) as a means for spreading voting participation may suggest a new paradigm when thinking of influencers as a means to inspire voter turnout. Rather than focusing solely on media and other macro level influencers to disseminate favorable social norms via the two-step flow of communication, it may instead make sense to rely on “social citizens” operating within social networks to spread this pro-social behavior.

As mentioned earlier, McClurg’s study on voter mobilization deals directly with the concept of increasing voter participation via third party contact. However,

The evidence shows that party contacts stimulate some indirect mobilization in social networks, though the behavioral impact of that process is somewhat limited. This supports the conventional wisdom that indirect mobilization can be stimulated by campaign behavior, while simultaneously showing that the effect of direct contacts is narrower and weaker than assumed. (McClurg, 2004, p. 427)

On the surface, this seems to question the notion influencers can be used to encourage voting behavior. However, as Sinclair suggests (Sinclair, 2012) it may simply suggest instead of trying to encourage indirect mobilization via participation in a campaign, a wiser move may be to identify the influencers (“social citizens”) within social networks and utilize them to establish social norms around voting.

Ultimately, the preceding studies indicate the most effective way to leverage social networks may be to foster social norms that see voting as an important facet of an individual’s place within their networks. Small world networks and their highly concentrated nature seem to be the best type of networks for encouraging voter behavior. Rethinking our definition of influencers to include Sinclair’s “social citizen” may be the key element to spreading the culture of voting as an important activity via these small world networks. With the preceding research in mind, focus groups, a survey, and expert interviews were conducted based on the **following hypotheses:**

- H1: Social networks increase voter likelihood by creating social expectations for the individual.
- H2: Small world networks consisting primarily of strong ties are the most effective types of networks for encouraging individuals to vote.
- H3: Everyday influencers or “social citizens” are the key to spreading the contagion of voting into traditionally non-voting populations.

Methods

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 19 participants participating in the study. The focus groups were held April 21 and 22, 2015 at the Minnesota State University Student Association office in Saint Paul, MN. The gender of those who participated was roughly balanced (9 women, 10 men). All participants were between the ages of 18-50. All participants were chosen using convenience sampling (personal outreach by the principal investigator). An introduction of the study was conducted at the beginning of each focus group and a consent form (Appendix A) was provided to each participant explaining their rights including the right to withdraw from the study at any time (none withdrew).

During each focus group, participants were asked 13 questions about their voting behaviors. Examples of questions included:

- Why did or do you vote? Please be as specific as possible.
- Inversely, elections where you haven't voted what were the reasons you chose not to? Again, please be as specific as possible.
- Before deciding to vote, do you consult with anyone? If so, who?
- Do you have conversations with friends and family about voting? If so, who?

A full list of questions is attached (Appendix B). All three focus groups were recorded and were transcribed the week following the studies. The transcriptions were then analyzed and thematically coded (Appendix C).

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted using Qualtrics from May 26 to June 8, 2015. 166 individuals responded to the survey. After eliminating partial responses and those ineligible for the study (those not able to vote), the final sample size was 149 individuals (a completion rate of 91%). 64% of respondents were female, 35% were male, and 1% did not provide their gender information. A large plurality of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 35 (50%). In addition, the majority of respondents listed their nationality as white (94%), had a bachelor degree or higher (69%), and were married or in a domestic partnership (56%). Responses were gathered using a convenience sample (researcher's Facebook and Twitter networks). All respondents and their responses were kept anonymous.

Including screening questions and demographic information, respondents were asked a total of 24 questions about their habits, discussions, and social media use around voting. These questions were informed by data from the aforementioned focus groups. Some examples included:

- What is the primary reason you vote?
- Do you discuss voting with others?
- How do social media posts affect whether or not you vote?
- Who do you look to most regularly for voting related information?
- Do you encourage others to vote?

A full list of questions and responses (Appendices D and E) is attached.

Expert Interviews

Five individuals who have extensive professional experience in voter mobilization were interviewed for 20-60 minutes each in order to understand how professionals in the field viewed the role of social networks in encouraging people to vote. Individuals had diverse experiences working on voter mobilization campaigns, with many having worked both for candidates and general get out the vote efforts. Interviewees included:

- **Graeme Allen**, Community and Political Organizer for the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation. Graeme's other voter related experience includes work on a local school levy campaigns, DFL party related voter outreach, and several cycles as a candidate in the New Brighton City Council elections.
- **Neil Aasve**, Director of Campus Organizing for the Minnesota State University Student Association. Neil also did voter outreach with Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 and a neighborhood organization in Minneapolis during several other election cycles.
- **Jason Fossum**, Director of Government Relations, Minnesota State College Student Association. In addition to his non-partisan work with the student association, Jason did voter outreach with the Minnesota Republican Party during several elections prior to 2010.
- **Carolyn Jackson**, Former American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Lobbyist and current attorney and lobbyist for Flaherty and Hood. During her time with the ACLU, Carolyn worked heavily on the campaign to defeat the Voter ID amendment.
- **Troy Olson**, Independent Political Consultant and former Obermueller for Congress Field Organizer. Troy also did voter outreach with Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2008, John Kerry's presidential campaign in 2004, and several local elections.

All interviews were held at restaurants and coffee shops throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area during the first two weeks of June 2015. 16 questions related directly to the

interviewees' professional experiences with and opinions about voter mobilization were asked to all those interviewed. Examples of questions included:

- In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?
- Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?
- How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?
- What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?
- In what ways have you relied on influencers or “opinion leaders” (i.e. media, influential community members, etc.) to help encourage individuals to vote?

A full list of questions is attached (see Appendix F). Follow-up questions were asked based on individual responses. All five interviews were recorded and transcribed the week following the interviews (see Appendix G).

Results

Focus Groups

Civic Duty and Social Approval

Focus group participants provided several valuable insights regarding individual voting behavior. First, it was clear voters overwhelmingly choose to vote because of an inherent sense of civic duty. One participant summed up this sentiment perfectly when asked why he voted, “I think because it’s your duty as a citizen, I consider it a duty.” Several focus group participants shared similar sentiments about why they ultimately choose to vote. This sense of civic duty

around voting may have origins within one's social network, something that is supported by the existing literature on this topic.

Evidence for a social component in the decision to vote was also a major component of why people said they voted. The second most common response to the question of why an individual votes was the idea of social approval. One participant captured the essence of this concept in the following statement: "...also because there exists like a social desirability around voting. Like I think most people that vote want to be known as being voters." This statement encapsulates the view many people vote in order to seek social approval. Furthermore, it is in line with the literature from Buffachi (2001) and Abrams et al. (2011) which notes social approval and reputation are key components in an individual's decision to vote.

Why People Choose Not to Vote

Alternatively, the reasons study participants gave for not coming out to the polls was less about peer and social influence and more about simply being uninformed. In fact, one participant indicated, "And I felt like I told them I really don't think I have enough education to vote. And they were like well, just go do it anyway. And I like wasn't comfortable with that idea." While many participants indicated they skipped voting in smaller elections due to lack of information, this statement in particular illustrates the dangers of any voter mobilization campaigns that do not include a voter education element.

While very few people mentioned social factors as a reason for not voting, there was one notable exception. One participant indicated,

“The first election I was able to vote in was the 2000 election I voted in that one. And I didn’t vote in another election until the 2006 mid-term election. And my reasoning is, probably the only reason I voted in the first election was how I was at the University of Minnesota Duluth and it was just sort of everybody in the dorms, everybody that was there went.”

Again, we see further evidence an individual’s social networks can play an important role in whether someone decides to vote. This suggests social networks are perhaps more effective at mobilizing people to vote than explaining why they do not.

Strong Ties and Voting

There was overwhelming evidence to support the notion individuals consult with their close social networks before voting. As one participant put it, “You know it’s not just you’re voting for this candidate it’s that friends A, B, and C supports this candidate and I want to go with them, cause I like them. I think friend and influential peers are huge social engines.” This idea was reflected consistently throughout all three focus groups. Not only does this suggest social networks figure prominently into an individual’s decision to vote, but also that small world networks and strong ties have a positive effect on influencing whether an individual votes.

This study presented strong evidence friends and family (strong ties) were important social networks for individuals when it comes to voting behavior, especially as a socializing element. In fact, parents were the most common response to the question of where an individual’s primary source of voting information originated. As one participant put it, “I always

went with them [my parents] to vote growing up and that's just you know ingrained it's something that you do." This sentiment was echoed by several study participants and shows how the importance of voting is entrenched at an early age by an individual's most immediate social networks.

Online Social Networks Effect on Voting

While study participants showed a strong reluctance to partake in political conversations around voting with an individual's online social networks (e.g. Facebook), most individuals indicated they did engage in general "posts" and discussions around the act of actual voting. For example, one participant indicated, "I wear the sticker or would say I voted on Facebook if I wanted to but I don't think I would say who." This data aligns with and expands earlier evidence social approval plays a factor in a person's decision to vote in the realm of online social networks.

The question of participation in online social networks also shows a strong preference for an individual's close social networks (friends and family). As one participant noted, "I do very little interactions with people on social media that I don't interact with in person." This sentiment (echoed by many other participants) indicates even in online social networks that are larger and may consist of a larger proportion of "weak ties," individuals tend to gravitate to those in their immediate social networks when discussing the idea of voting.

Traditional Influencers and Voting

Another important finding from this study, is, despite the prominent role of close social networks like family in friends in instilling the importance of voting, influencers like the media,

college professors, and political organizations still play a prominent role in an individual's decision to vote. Several participants pointed to college professors and courses as the source of their understanding of voting as an important behavior. Furthermore, many of those who indicated their parents were most influential in instilling the importance of voting also indicated either the influence of college or media sources, like MTV (see Appendix C). In addition, when asked whether people are more likely to vote if friends and family ask them or if a candidate/political party asks them, there tended to be a preference toward the candidate/political party. These results suggest while intimate, small world social networks may have the strongest effect on an individual's decision to vote, traditional influencers and opinion leaders still have a role to play in instilling a culture of pro-voting behavior.

An interesting finding of this study supporting the role of social networks, while simultaneously calling into question their influence, is the response of study participants to the question of whether there was one person they looked to when looking for advice on voting. The top two themes found in answer to this question was individuals believed they looked primarily to themselves when deciding to vote and those who did look for outside advice typically went to multiple sources. For example, one participant stated he wanted, "lots of responses from lots of people and lots of defenses from those positions so I can like actually try and figure out why I should vote for this candidate or any of the others right, there's not a one person...that actually makes me uncomfortable." This quote shows there tends to be a preference for people to hear multiple opinions from their social network, so they can have confidence in their individual voting decision.

Voting as a Habit

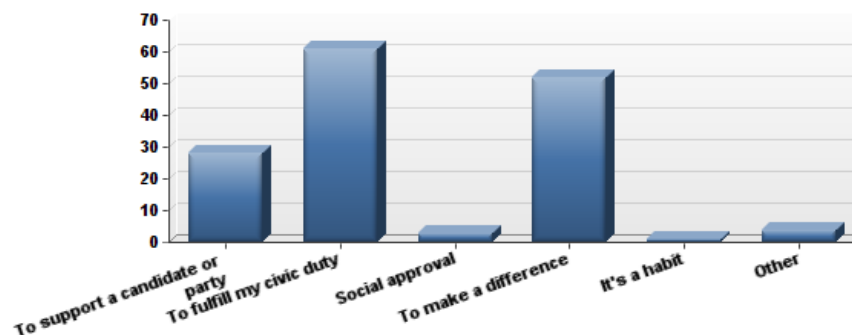
A final finding worth mentioning is the idea of voting as a habitual act. When asked if there was anything additional they would like to add about voting behavior, several study participants volunteered their belief that voting was a habit they would likely continue throughout their lifetime. “Like once you’re a ‘voter’ you’re just kinda set you know that you’re gonna vote...” Identifying as a voter and forming the habit seems to be a key component of why many individuals vote. This finding, in concert with previous results of this study, imply a key component of utilizing social networks to improve voter turnout may be in creating a social norm around it in as many interpersonal networks as possible.

Online Survey

As was mentioned, many of the questions used in the survey were heavily influenced by the focus groups, however the larger sample size and narrower focus of the questions provided a number of interesting insights.

Why People Vote (or Choose Not To)

Figure 1: Primary Reason People Vote

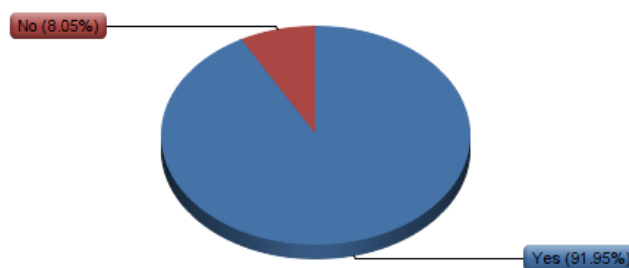


At first glance, the survey results seem to discount social approval (2%) as a primary factor in deciding whether people decide to vote. However, the primary reason provided for why people decide to vote was “to fulfill my civic duty” (41%). The literature on the topic of voting as a desirable social norm supports the idea that civic duty as a reason for voting is largely based on social influence from their social networks (Sinclair, 2012). Thus, even though social approval was not explicitly given as a reason for why people vote, it is clear it plays a central role in instilling a need to vote in the study participants.

Meanwhile, the leading reason for why people chose not to vote was similar to that given by focus group respondents— they simply felt uninformed (48% of respondents). It is worth noting several individuals indicated they never skipped voting, which is likely a result of 60% of respondents indicating they vote in presidential, midterm and off-year municipal elections.

Voters Discuss Voting

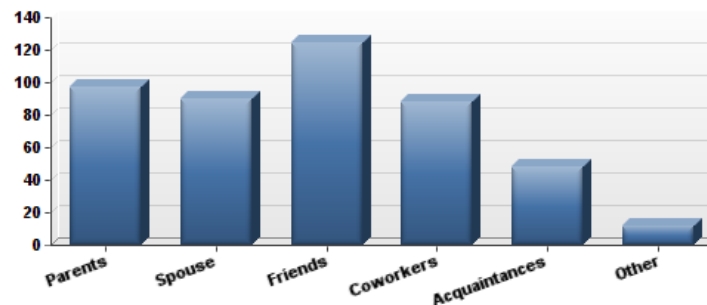
Figure 2. Percentage of People Who Discuss Voting With Others



Over 91% of survey respondents indicated they discussed voting with others. Over 57% of respondents said having these discussions made them more likely to vote, further supporting

the idea that discussions within social networks have a positive effect on whether an individual decides to vote.

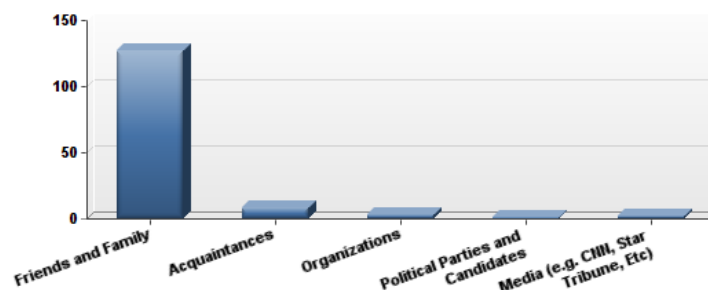
Figure 3. Who Voters Discuss Voting With



The top four discussants revealed by respondents who indicated they talked about voting with others were friends (91%), parents (71%), spouses (66%) and coworkers (64%), with acquaintances, ranking near the bottom of this list at 35%. These results provide at least partial evidence that an individual's closer, strong ties tend to be the ones with whom they most often discuss voting.

Online Social Networks Effect on Voting

Figure 4. Who Individuals Primarily Engage With on Social Media



A consideration of this study touched on in the focus groups and further explored in the survey is whether online social networks have an effect on an individual's decision to vote.

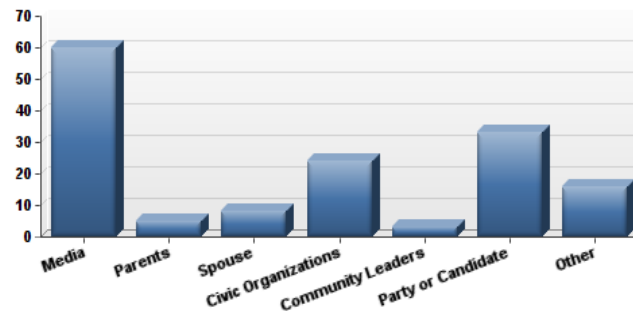
While an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they were active on social media (95%), most indicated it has no effect on whether or not they decide to vote (71%).

Furthermore, a larger percentage of respondents (90%) indicated they interacted primarily with their friends and family (strong ties) on social media. Finally, of those who indicated they were more likely to vote because of social media (25%), the leading reason given for the increased voting likelihood was “help inform me about the election.”

The responses to the questions about online social networks indicate several issues. One, most individuals do not believe social media plays a role in whether or not they ultimately vote, which calls into question whether this platform is a credible means for increasing voter turnout via social influence. Furthermore, the conversations and interactions taking place on social media are with an individual’s strong ties, indicating that even online, people tend to communicate about voting with their strong ties. Lastly, for those whose voting likelihood is affected by a social media, it serves primarily as a means of gathering information. Considering this, it may be safe to assume that if online social networks have a role to play in improving voter turnout, it is in helping better inform the uninformed voter rather than creating social influence.

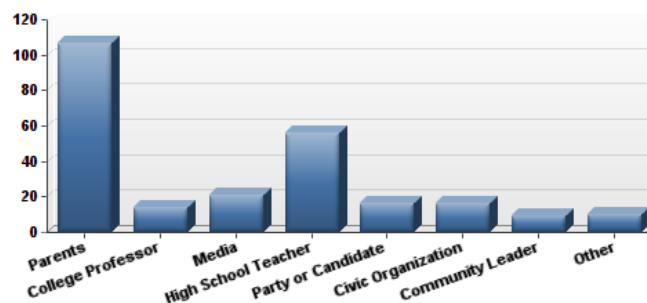
Influencers and Voting

Figure 5. Primary Sources of Voter Information



While the majority of respondents (63%) indicated there was not one individual they looked to for voting related information, it is clear they do look to others for this information. Interestingly, a plurality of respondents (40%) indicated they looked to the media most regularly for voting information. With the candidate or party (22%) and civic organizations (16%) rounding out the top three entities looked to for voting related information it is apparent traditional influencers and the two-step flow of communication still have a role to play in encouraging people to vote.

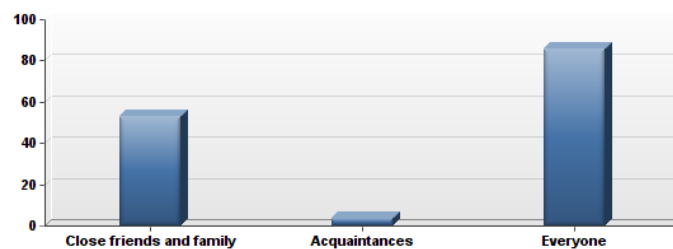
Figure 6. Where Individuals First Learn the Importance of Voting



However, if we look at the questions of where individuals first learned the importance of voting we see a much different picture. Over 72% of respondents indicated their parents

were where they first learned the importance of voting. High school teachers and media rounded out the top three responses to this question at 34% and 14% respectively. When we consider the earlier focus group data and previous research which sees voting as a habitual behavior, there appears to be support for the idea of a more intimate influencer like the “social citizen” (Sinclair, 2012). The data suggests parents, and to a lesser extent, high school teachers, may be conduits for establishing the social norms in their social networks (families and classrooms) to instill pro-voting behaviors in young individuals.

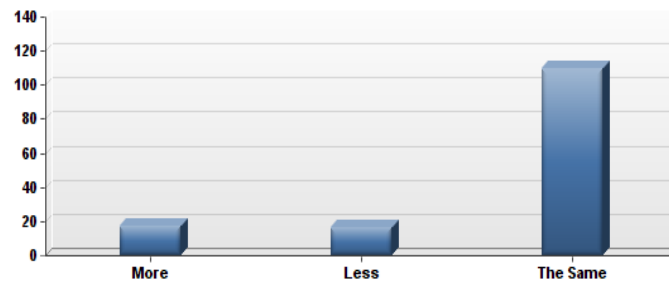
Figure 7. Who Individuals Encourage to Vote



An overwhelming number of respondents indicated they encourage others to vote (96%). Furthermore, 60% of those individuals indicated they encourage both friends and family (strong ties) and acquaintances (weak ties) to vote. As was previously indicated, a large percentage of these individuals also vote in every election (60%). Considering so many strong voters also encourage others to vote, this also supports the idea of Sinclair’s “social citizen” (Sinclair, 2012) present in the data.

Candidate and Party Influence on the Voter

Figure 8. How Party Contact Effects Likelihood Individual Will Encourage Others to Vote



The survey data does not seem to support the idea of party inspired indirect mobilization. Over 77% of respondents indicated party contact would have no effect on whether they decided to encourage someone to vote. Furthermore, respondents were split on whether friends or family members were more influential on their decision to vote (48%) or if friends or family and candidates or party had an equal effect on whether they voted (48%). Though, it is worth noting that only 3% of respondents indicated party and candidate alone were more likely lead to them voting. This data indicates that to increase voter likelihood, relying on those “social citizens” to spread pro-voting behavior within social networks may be far more effective than relying on party operatives or candidates.

Expert Interviews

Why People Vote (or Choose Not To)

Interestingly, only one interviewee mentioned civic duty as a primary motivator for why individuals vote. Most of the experts interviewed for this study believe people voter primarily for personal reasons. As Neil Aasve indicated, “people ultimately vote if they can identify a personal stake or personal interest in what issues are going to be important or that the

candidates stand for.” This point of view presents an interesting contrast to the voter data provided by the survey and focus groups which indicated civic duty as a leading reason for voting, suggesting a possible disconnect between many who work on campaigns and voter behavior. Though this, as will be discussed later, may simply be a result of how the question was interpreted.

Despite the difference in opinion regarding voter motivation, most of the interviewees’ opinions about the reasons for why people choose not to vote were in line with voter responses to the same question. Several indicated a lack of knowledge about the election seemed to be the reason most people choose not to vote. However, an interesting secondary reason was the idea many people either did not care or felt their vote did not matter. This may suggest the utilization of social networks to create a social norms around voting could be an effective means for increasing voter turnout.

Is Social Approval a Factor in Turnout?

Despite giving reasons other than social approval for why people vote, further probing of several interviewees showed support for this concept. When talking specifically about how social networks were leveraged in their efforts, many of the interviewees expressed the belief social influence was the key factor in why many people vote. Neil Aasve expressed this concept in the following statement about his work doing voter outreach on college campuses, “Really encouraging the students that are already engaged and their leaders on the campus to really leverage their networks, they should be wanting to get turnout to an event and talking with their friends so yeah I think definitely I’ve done that.” All of those interviewed shared similar

stories of utilizing social influence to try increase voter turnout both generally and for a candidate.

Mobilizing Voters: Finding the Right Messenger

The interviewees provided an extensive amount of information regarding messaging and tactics they use to encourage voters. For the purpose of this study, this section will focus on those tactics and message pertaining to the role of social networks in voting. A key theme that came out of the interviews was that it is not only vital to find a personalized message appealing to the voters, but a messenger with whom the target audience could relate. Carolyn Jackson, when speaking about her experiences on partisan campaigns and her work with the ACLU summed up this idea, “...it’s both the message and the messenger, because if I were to go down and say ‘your vote really matters’ they’re like ‘who the heck are you and why do we care.’” Once the importance of the messenger has been established, the next question becomes who that person should be. Fortunately, the experts had plenty to say on this topic.

Several of the experts interviewed for the study identified friends and family as the most influential networks for encouraging electoral action. Despite questioning the effectiveness of social approval as a reason for voter turnout, Troy Olson illustrated the importance of friend networks several times, “so realistically it’s about getting into those low sort of turnout areas and getting one person jazzed up about voting and then getting them to get ten of their friends [to vote].” The perception an individual’s strong ties are the most persuadable messenger for encouraging voting was echoed by most of the interviewees, especially when referring to their attempts to reach out to communities in which they had no previous presence. Not only does this lend credence to the view that highly concentrated “small world” networks (Fowler, 2005)

are the most effective networks for increasing voter turnout, but it also provides further support for how influencers can be most effectively employed.

Utilizing Influencers and the “Social Citizen”

Before further delving into the topic of how experts effectively employ influencers in their campaigns, it is worth touching on the media’s role in political campaigns. Carolyn Jackson said about the media and low engagement voters, “As far as low engagement voters, that’s really hard because they’re probably not reading the paper they’re probably not watching the evening news so the thing is—how do you reach them?” This, coupled with most of the experts indicating a general lack of media utilization in their work, raises an interesting question of whether the media influences people’s voter likelihood or if those who vote are simply more prone to engage with the media. While this is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning in light of the experts’ apparent lack of media use.

Returning to the topic of influencer use, many of their statements provide evidence pointing to the use of every day influencers similar to Sinclair’s “social citizen” (Sinclair, 2012). Both of the experts who worked directly with college students relied heavily on this type of influencer based voter outreach. Jason Fossum’s work with the Minnesota State College Student Association illustrates this model succinctly, “From an MSCSA perspective you know we, our whole structure is with our student leaders that we work with and then getting them to take it to the campuses. So we do all the training, we get them all the tools, we get them excited to vote then get them to do the actual work on the campus. So that’s our whole, get out the vote effort.” This coupled with earlier statements about utilizing one person to encourage communities and social networks to engage in voting shows, at least from a professional

perspective, there is an understanding influencing voter engagement is most effective from within existing social networks.

Online Social Networks: A Place for Information, Not Engagement

While there was a somewhat mixed opinion on the effectiveness of online social networks (social media), one theme did present itself. Most professionals saw social media as a place to disseminate information and create visibility. As the most positive advocate among the interviewees for the role of online social networks in voter outreach, Graeme Allen may have put it best, “And I think with the advantages of things like Facebook and Twitter and all those other kinds of networks is the relatively cheap ability to, especially during GOTV, to get messages out quickly, information out quickly and really kind of blast people on all sorts of waves.” Social media as a place to get information is something the survey respondents had echoed, but it begs the question of whether online social networks are effective means for actually increasing social activity around voting.

Several of the experts seemed to think actual engagement via social media may be on the decline. Carolyn Jackson indicated, “Facebook has been a new thing that people are using, but then again low engagement voters are not going on Facebook anymore so it’s not cool. That’s an old people thing. It’s become establishment.” Meanwhile, Troy Olson had this to say, “I feel from an individual activist standpoint, it’s been a law of diminishing returns...” These statements taken together seem to point to a belief among those doing voter outreach that the effectiveness of online social networks as a means for encouraging action (especially in low engagement populations) is not what it once was.

A final revelation from the interviews was the idea that online social networks may be evolving to serve as a push and visibility medium, similar to television. When referring to social networks, Troy Olson may have summed up this idea best in the following statement: “I think there was a certain heyday for social networks in political campaigns and they’re still certainly used big time especially at the high-end level. It’s part of your campaign. It’s become a whole new part, like television.” This statement coupled with others indicating their use of social media focuses on pushing out necessary, voting related information, seems to a point to a paradigm where online social networks have become the “new television” and serve less as a place for discussion around voting and more an information source.

Discussion

Utilizing the findings of this study, we can find support for all three hypotheses derived from the literature on the topic of voting and social networks.

H1: Social networks increase voter likelihood by creating social expectations for the individual.

The information provided by voters, both in the survey and focus group data show strong support for this hypothesis. As Abrams, Iversen, and Soskine illustrated, “Discussion of politics and group turnout lead individuals to believe that it is important to know about politics and to vote, and this in turn predicts whether people actually vote” (Abrams et al, 2011, p. 256). With this in mind, it may be safe to infer that the concept of civic duty has origins in the norms created by social influence. Considering both the focus group and survey data indicates civic duty is the primary reason for why people vote, it is safe to assume social expectations are at the core of this behavior. Furthermore, considering parents and teachers were the two most

common answers to the question of where individuals first learned the importance of voting, it stands to reason these social expectations originate within the individual's social network.

While most of the experts did not explicitly respond to the question of why people vote with civic duty and/or social approval, further probing revealed support for this hypothesis. In addition to one expert who explicitly stated civic duty was a reason for voting, most of the other respondents shared a heavy reliance on social networks to encourage voter turnout. This suggests that, while the professionals may not see the motivations behind individual voting behavior as conforming to social influences, the methods they employ rely heavily on this assumption. In fact, based on the rest of the responses given by the interviewees it is possible if further probing had been done related to the question of why people vote, they may have ultimately provided responses more in line with their outreach tactics.

H2: Small world networks consisting primarily of strong ties are the most effective types of networks for encouraging individuals to vote.

Both the focus groups and surveys provide evidence small world networks consisting of strong ties may be the most effective means for encouraging individuals to vote. Friends and family seem to be the primary groups individuals discuss voting with—whether they like it or not. Furthermore, when interacting with online social networking platforms like Twitter and Facebook, respondents showed an overwhelming preference towards their strong ties. If we assume small world networks consist of a “high concentration of shared interests” (Fowler 2006) it may be safe to assume strong ties like friends and family are one social network which

falls into this category, thus providing support for the idea that small world networks are most effective for encouraging individuals to vote.

In addition, parents and high school teachers were the top two responses to the question of where respondents first learned the importance of voting. Not only does this further support the idea it is strong ties that most influence whether or not someone finds voting important, but it also presents an example of an ideal intermediary between the in-clique groups that make up a small world network. High school teachers are often times a linking factor between various social networks within the school atmosphere. Their ability to serve as a link between the various students who come through their classroom and pass information about the importance of voting to each of their in-clique networks has important implications for the effectiveness of small world networks as a place for effective voter contagion. The fact a larger number of the respondents in this study are regular voters and many of them developed that habit thanks to the guidance of a teacher may provide evidence small networks do in fact encourage the spread of pro-voting behavior.

The statements made by the experts also seem to show support, or at least a strong bias, towards this hypothesis. Most listed friends and family as the most influential social network in encouraging individuals to vote. The fact survey and focus group participants' preference to discuss voting primarily with friends and family is recognized by those doing voter outreach supports the idea networks consisting of strong ties are the most influential when it comes to voting. To answer the question of how small world networks with these types of ties can be leveraged, one must look to the final hypothesis.

H3: Everyday influencers or “social citizens” are the key to spreading the contagion of voting into traditionally non-voting populations.

While influencers like the media and political campaigns still play a role in the decision to vote, it is clear more personal influencers like friends and family are a larger factor in increasing the likelihood someone will vote. One way this is apparent is in the influence of an individual’s parents (and teachers to a lesser extent) to instill the importance of voting at an early age. Coupled with evidence this early social influence builds a habit of voting, it is clear this strong tie may be the most effective influencer in many people’s lives.

In addition, the advice given by many of the experts coupled with the high percentage of survey respondents who both vote in every election and discuss voting, lends further credibility to the idea of Sinclair’s “social citizen” (2012). By indicating that friends and family tend to be the most effective network for encouraging voter turnout, the experts emphasized the importance of finding the right messenger. Furthermore, the evidence for strong ties as the most influential network relationships supports the assertion of many of the experts. The best method for reaching those individuals who do not vote regularly lies in focusing on recruiting one active voter and utilizing them as a contagion to spread the social influence of voting among their close social networks.

Beyond the Hypotheses: The Role of Online Social Networks and the Media

Two areas that yielded interesting information, not directly related to the researcher’s hypotheses, were in the areas of online social networks and traditional influencers, like the media. While the researcher originally explored online social networks due to a suspicion

individuals would have a larger concentration of weak tie connections via this avenue, as has been discussed, this was not the case.

However, one interesting finding from the research related to online social networks was the respondents from the survey and the experts interviewed both indicated this avenue is most heavily used for information gathering. In fact, one expert went as far as saying he believed online social networks have become the new television. This suggests while online social networks may not be an effective means of spreading pro-voting behavior via social norms, they can assist with addressing the primary reason many choose not to vote—a lack of information about elections.

Furthermore, study respondents indicated traditional influencers, like the media, still play a role in their voting behaviors. As was mentioned, 63% of the respondents indicated the media was their primary source of information when it came to voting. This suggests the media's primary role in encouraging voter turnout is in the realm of providing information. Furthermore, when coupled with what the data shows about online social networks and their role in a voter's behavior, it reveals the media's ability to engage directly with online social networks is a key to their effectiveness as a catalyst of increased voter turnout.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

There were several limitations to this study. First, convenience sampling was used to solicit participants for both the focus groups and the survey. As a result, most of those who participated in the focus groups and the survey came from the principal investigator's social network, which may have led to a selection bias toward engaged voters. A study including a

more randomized sampling of voting behavior may lead to more complete data on what motivates non-voting populations to become voters.

Another limitation of this study is in regards to time and human resources. This research was conducted and analyzed solely by the principal investigator. This opens up the collection and analysis of the research to error and personal bias. Further studies of this type should make use of outside data collectors to address concerns on the collection side. Furthermore, a second or even a third researcher could be brought in to assist with data coding and analysis to ensure all themes and patterns are accurately reflected.

A third limitation of this study regards voters' perceptions of why they vote. It is possible many of the participants may not be conscious of all of the reasons for their voting behavior. While most people may think they vote for rational reasons, it is very possible there are more emotional motivations beneath the surface. In order to more accurately ascertain voter behavior it may make sense to use other study methodology. In fact, relying on a more experimental model and observation of voting behaviors in a controlled environment may provide a more complete picture of the reasoning behind people's decision to vote.

A final limitation posed by this study regarded the expert interviews. All respondents interviewed had extensive experience with voter campaign work from a field operations perspective. While this type of work does include a certain level of mass communications, its focus is primarily on direct voter engagement. However, due to time and network constraints, the researcher was unable to connect with an expert who worked primarily in the field of communications. Future studies in this area may benefit from gaining such perspective.

In addition to the aforementioned research, this study provides several other topics for further consideration. Looking more closely at how social networks affect voting behavior within the context of a recent election warrants further attention. Furthermore, while this study was focused on how social networks affect individual voting behavior, it is worth exploring how social networks can be used to inspire other forms of political participation (e.g. donating money, volunteering, etc.) and whether there is a correlation between these behaviors and actually casting a vote. While this study was localized to Minnesota and the United States' political system, a comparative study of democracies around the world would enable a larger understanding of social networks and voting behavior and their interaction with different cultures. Finally, even though the effect of online social networks on voter likelihood was briefly addressed in this study, a more comprehensive study may be necessary to truly understand the full extent of their influence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research provides support that social networks, especially those made up of strong ties, play a critical role in whether an individual decides to vote. By utilizing the evidence presented in this study, it is possible to make initial recommendations to increase voting behavior through the use of social networks. First, in order to most effectively instill voting within a social network, messaging focused on the civic importance of voting should be introduced at a relatively early age. Second, the most effective conduits for creating social influence around voting are parents, teachers, and other “social citizens” who can then influence the small social networks they impact. By identifying these every day, ground level influencers, campaigns and other organizations should be better equipped to take advantage of

the small world networks most conducive to creating contagious voting behavior. Furthermore, the media's role as an information source is still very important. As online social networks continue to become a place for information gathering, it is vital media outlets maintain and expand their presence in the networks. In order to truly address low voter turnout, a combination of social influences via "social citizens" within small world networks and increased information must be employed.

A Strategic Communications Framework for Increasing Voter Turnout

Using the results and recommendations from this study, it is possible to create a general strategic communications framework for organizations looking to increase voter turnout. This framework focuses on three areas: instilling social norms, effectively targeting and using social citizens, and providing important information.

Instill Social Norms

In order to combat the tumultuous nature of political issues and party enthusiasm, it is vital to establish the habit of voting at a young age. It is beneficial to both political parties and civic organization focused on increasing voter turnout to take a long term view of this issue. For parties, an expanded voting bloc enables them to increase their responsiveness to the electorate. Meanwhile, for organizations focused on increasing general voter turnout at the macro level, it is important to realize when citizens are young they develop their life long habits, one of which is voting. Considering these two factors, it is clear any strategic communications framework aimed at increasing voter turnout should contain strategies with this long term focus.

Based on the research and author's personal experience, there are several measures aimed at instilling social norms at a young age that should be included in a strategic communications framework. They include:

1. Create messaging aimed at parents that emphasizes the importance of not only voting to perform their civic duty, but to pass that behavior along to their children.
2. Expand voting related education in the classroom.
3. Implement a mandatory mock election program in the K-12 school system that is conducted during every election (local, state, and national).
4. Create grants aimed at ensuring school districts in poorer communities are able to take advantage of the aforementioned resources.
5. Integrate pro-voting messages in children's programming.

These five actions leverage the most influential "social citizens" in children's lives to instill the importance of voting at an early age. However, this does not provide a solution to engage current voters. Fortunately, the second facet of this framework does.

Effectively Target and Use Social Citizens

As the literature and research shows, the key to increasing voter participation lies in the finding "social citizens" within networks and utilizing them to create a social norm around voting. As many of the experts interviewed indicated, this is especially true in populations that traditionally do not vote. In order to find and effectively use these citizens, the author suggests the following:

1. Leverage existing data to find non-voting populations and identify trendsetters and thought leaders within those communities.

2. Employ field operations staff embedded in communities who do not traditionally vote (youth, low-income, minorities, etc.).
3. Use social media to identify influencers within social networks and develop messaging based on their interests.
4. Once “social citizens” are identified, provide training aimed at better equipping them to discuss why voting matters with their peers.
5. Create programs that recognize and reward “social citizens” for discussing and serving as brand ambassadors for voting.

While the research heavily supports the role of the “social citizen” in increasing voter turnout, simply recognizing their importance is not enough. These strategies provide a way to not only identify “social citizens,” but to effectively employ them to increase voter turnout.

Provide Important Information

While engaging those who never vote is important, another factor that should be considered is engaging voters beyond presidential elections. In the United States, voter turnout tends to be a great deal lower during midterm and off-year elections (Desilver, 2014). In order to truly address low voter turnout, we must deal with this drop off. The fact respondents to the survey and the focus groups indicated the primary reason they chose not to vote in any election was due to a lack of information suggests any strategic framework aimed at increasing communications should include approaches for addressing this issue. To that end, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Encourage the media to play a leading role in providing information about voting during all elections, especially traditionally lower turnout midterm and off-year elections.
2. Focus social media messaging on providing information and resources both on logistics related to voting and on the elections themselves.

3. Use public and private data to identify and target individuals who only vote during presidential elections with messages aimed at informing them about off-year and midterm elections.
4. Develop messaging emphasizing the impact and importance of the local and state elections that typically headline midterm and off-year elections.
5. Establish high-profile events like concerts and block parties to serve as conduits for informing voters about upcoming elections.

While some may question whether a lack of information is the reason many people choose not to vote, the research suggests addressing this problem is key to encouraging people to vote in lower profile elections. Online social networks and traditional media outlets remain an important source of information about elections. Furthermore, it is clear additional efforts need to be made to inform voters about non-presidential elections. The above strategies leverage these realities in an attempt to increase voter turnout by increasing voter knowledge about all elections.

Figure 9. Strategic Framework for Increasing Voter Turnout

Instill Social Norms	Effectively Target and Use Social Citizens	Provide Important Information
Create messaging aimed at parents that emphasizes the importance of not only voting to perform their civic duty, but to pass that behavior along to their children.	Leverage existing data to find non-voting populations and identify trendsetters and thought leaders within those communities.	Encourage the media to play a leading role in providing information about voting during all elections, especially traditionally lower turnout midterm and off-year elections.
Expand voting related education in the classroom.	Employ field operations staff embedded in communities who do not traditionally vote (youth, low-income, minorities, etc.).	Focus social media messaging on providing information and resources both on logistics related to voting and on the elections themselves.
Implement a mandatory mock election program in the K-12 school system that is conducted during every election (local, state, and national).	Use social media to identify influencers within social networks and develop messaging based on their interests.	Use public and private data to identify and target individuals who only vote during presidential elections with messages aimed at informing them about off-year and midterm elections.
Create grants aimed at ensuring school districts in poorer communities are able to take advantage of the aforementioned resources.	Once “social citizens” are identified, provide training aimed at better equipping them to discuss why voting matters with their peers.	Develop messaging emphasizing the impact and importance of the local and state elections that typically headline midterm and off-year elections.
Integrate pro-voting messages in children’s programming.	Create programs that recognize and reward “social citizens” for discussing and serving as brand ambassadors for voting.	Establish high-profile events like concerts and block parties to serve as conduits for informing voters about upcoming elections.

The above strategic communications framework serves as a starting point for those organizations interested in increasing voter turnout. Its focus on the areas of norm building, effective use of social citizens, and providing information originates in the findings of this study. While most of the elements of the plan originate directly from the results of this study, some were derived based on the researcher’s personal experiences with voter outreach. Depending on the goals of those working to engage voters, it may be necessary to expand or alter individual components of this framework to align with the organization’s resources and goals.

Final Thoughts

This paper address the crisis of low voter turnout by exploring how social networks both explain voter turnout and how they can be utilized to increase it. However, the author recognizes there are many factors not directly related to social norms that prevent individuals from voting.

For one, there are efforts by some in this country to discourage certain groups of people from voting in order to maintain an electorate more favorable to their preferred candidate or party's points of view. This is accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, many see the reliance on negative advertising as a tactic aimed at reducing enthusiasm for, and by extension, participation in voting. In addition, whether intentional or not, many laws have been passed in recent years creating additional barriers to those seeking to cast their vote. Whether it be the poll tests that dominated the first half of the twentieth century or the more recent voter photo identification laws, legal barriers have historically discouraged many individuals from participating in the electoral process.

Beyond blatant efforts to discourage voters, there are also practical factors many people choose not to vote. For those who live in rural areas, the distance from a polling place can be an obstacle to casting a vote. Furthermore, for countless low income Americans, taking time off work or away from their children to vote is simply not an option. At first glance, these factors may seem beyond the bounds of this paper. However, upon closer review that is not the case.

Fortunately, most of the obstacles individuals face when voting can be addressed. For example, mail-in absentee voting has allowed many rural counties in Minnesota to eliminate the problem of distant polling places by mailing ballots to all eligible voters. "Early Voting" laws allowing voters to cast their ballot in the weeks leading up to the election give individuals with lower incomes the flexibility needed to exercise their vote. Even voter photo identification laws can be overcome if the citizens of the states where these laws exist put pressure on their elected officials to repeal them.

The same factors enabling social networks to increase voting behavior can assist in removing most, if not all, of these barriers. Utilizing “social citizens” to create norms supporting policies increasing accessibility to elections can be a central component in the creation of laws like absentee and early voting. In fact, one might argue the reason Minnesota does not require photo identification to vote is due to the influence of “social citizens” who turned public opinion against a constitutional amendment that would have required it. Furthermore, social networks and the expectations they place on individuals can serve as a counter to the discouragement negative campaign advertisements can cause.

There are many factors determining why people vote. Interest in a particular candidate or issue, perceived influence on an electoral result, and loyalty to a political party are all examples of reasons to vote. However, many of these justifications to vote can often lead to inconsistent voting. In the previously mentioned cases, a lack of preferred candidate or issue, a non-competitive election, and dissatisfaction with one’s chosen political party can all lead to an individual deciding not to vote. On the other hand, as the data from this study illustrates, social norms created by social network influence have been shown to lead to more regular and consistent voting patterns. With this in mind, it is clear understanding and leveraging the influence of social networks is key to addressing the crisis of low voter turnout.

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Appendix A Focus Group Consent Form

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH

Social Networks and Voting Behavior

You are invited to be in a research study of voting behavior. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an eligible voter. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Jered Weber, Strategic Communications Masters Student at the University of Minnesota

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in a focus group where you will answer a number of questions on your voting and decision making behaviors. All responses will be tape recorded for accuracy. This study should take no more than 2 hours of your time.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. All data, including tape recordings will be accessed only by the Primary researcher and his advisors. Audio recordings will be disposed of at the completion of the study and no later than September 1, 2015.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Jered Weber. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at 186 Summit Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55102, 701.388.7283, webe0506@umn.edu or contact Jered's advisor Steve Wehrenberg at wehre003@umn.edu or 612.625.6383.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix B Focus Group Questions

Social Networks and Voting Behavior Focus Group Guide

Introduction and Warm-Up

1. **Welcome.** Explain the purpose of the Research. “Today we’ll be talking about voting. Both generally and in context of the 2014 election
2. **Approach.** No right or wrong answers. Give us your honest opinion. Focus discussion on your personal experiences.
3. **Logistics.** Tape-recorded and transcribed.
4. **Introductions.** First names and icebreaker.

Questions

1. Did you vote in the election this past November?
2. Why did or do you vote? Please be as specific as possible.
3. Inversely, elections where you haven’t voted what were the reasons you chose not to? Again, please be as specific as possible.
4. Before deciding to vote, do you consult with anyone? If so, who?
5. Do you have conversations with friends and family about voting? If so, who?
6. On a similar note, do you engage in voting conversations on social media platforms? (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Etc.)? Why or why not?
7. If you do have voting related conversations on social media, are you more likely to have them with close friends and family or acquaintances?
8. Where does your primary source of information about the importance of voting come from?
9. More generally, who (or where) do you look when you need help making a decision?
10. Is there one person you look to for advice on voting and other important issues? If so, who?
11. Are you more or less likely to vote if one of your friends and family asks you to?
12. Are you more likely to vote because of a political party or candidate asks you too or because a friend, family member, or coworker asks you too?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add about your decision to vote or not vote?

Appendix C Focus Group Results

Focus Groups

Question 1. Did you vote in the election

Category		
Code	Participant ID	Responses
N/A	Female 1.1	Yes
N/A	Female 1.2	Yes
N/A	Male 1.1	Yes
N/A	Female 1.3	Yes
N/A	Female 1.4	Yes
N/A	Male 1.2	Yes
N/A	Male 2.1	No
N/A	Male 2.2	Yes
N/A	Male 2.3	Yes
N/A	Male 2.4	Yes
N/A	Female 2.1	Yes
N/A	Female 2.2	Yes
N/A	Male 3.1	Yes
N/A	Male 3.2	Yes
N/A	Male 3.3	Yes
N/A	Male 3.4	Yes
N/A	Female 3.1	Yes
N/A	Female 3.2	Yes
N/A	Female 3.3	Yes

Focus Groups

Question	2. Why did or do you vote? Please be as specific as possible	
Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
A	Male 2.4	I feel like voting cause to be responsible about knowing the issues and who's running
A	Female 1.1	I feel like it's my duty to vote, like I should makes me a better person
A	Male 2.1	My civic duty and as part of being a democratic eventually I feel that sense we have the right we should exercise it.
A	Male 2.2	I'm highly partisan I think it's not only my duty to vote every opportunity its representative of democracy and it's what this is all
A	Male 2.3	I feel civic responsibility to vote and I usually get paid by elections to vote there
A	Female 2.2	I feel like as a woman I should vote. Because women weren't always allowed to vote so I feel like we have the right to vote I need to
A	Male 3.2	I think because it's your duty as a citizen, I consider it a duty.
A	Female 3.1	I think it's my right and my duty and if I'm informed I want to go and make sure I support who ever or whatever issue that's important to
B	Male 3.2	But also because there exists like a social desirability around voting. Like I think most people that vote want to be known as being voters.
B	Male 3.3	It only matters because there's like this sort of unspoken like not expectation but pressure to vote. I guess I would add maybe to feel involved in the process somehow. But I think to the point you made about it being socially desirable I can only think of a couple people I know who didn't vote in the last election. And I would honestly feel really awkward if somebody asked me if I didn't. because almost everybody I know does. I guess I would I really agree with that (Male 3.4) and that like if you are not in the sort of winning block of people who voted. At least you know you can sort of see trends over time and I think that seeing trends over time influences people to vote. And I don't know if its If I would like iudged
C	Female 1.3	I voted because I want stronger benefits for poor people.
C	Male 3.1	I think the results of electoral politics can be seen in almost every aspect of our lives and I just feel that with that knowledge knowing that I have some sort of say in that process of what does or doesn't happen through my voting I feel that I should take advantage of that
C	Male 3.3	Because I believe in the power of electoral politics to change world and improve people's lives. . The way that I vote doesn't really have an impact on local elections.
D	Female 1.4	Because it's very largely Republican and I'm not. So I voted more for local city council race. I knew who was running in ours and it was I voted to make sure that I had a voice in the local community that represented me.
E	Male 1.1	Yeah I feel like it's important to vote if I want my voice to be heard. I don't vote then I don't feel like I have as much of a right at least to I guess I feel that I don't have a right to complain about the way things are if you don't go out there and make your vote count. It's interesting that everyone in this room has voted. But very rarely would you find people of this age group in a room where they all
E	Female 2.1	
E	Male 3.4	
F	Female 1.2	I would somewhat out of convenience actually.

Coding Categories

- A Civic Duty
- B Social Approval
- C Make a Difference
- D Support a Candidate
- E Be Heard
- F Easy to Do

Focus Groups

Question 3. Inversely, elections where you haven't voted what were the reasons you chose not to? Again, please be as specific as possible

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
A	Female 1.4	I missed the 2006 because I was not living in the country
A	Male 2.2	I was under the age of 18.
A	Male 3.1	I didn't vote in '06 because I was in college in Moorhead and to order an absentee ballots I couldn't get down to my home town to register to vote, I could have registered in Moorhead, didn't know that. Didn't plan to vote.
A	Male 3.4	I missed the city election when I was deployed and I did not vote because of the impossibility of getting an absentee ballot for a city election.
B	Female 1.2	I didn't vote in the 2012 presidential election because I did not want to walk all the way back to my dorm to vote
C	Male 1.1	The first election I was able to vote in was the 2000 election I voted in that one. And I didn't vote in another election until the 2006 mid-term election. And my reasoning is, probably the only reason I voted in the first election was how I was at the University of Minnesota, Duluth and it was just sort of everybody in the dorms, everybody that was there went.
D	Female 1.3	I've missed off year elections that are just doing city offices or something like that-- Didn't Care
D	Female 2.2	I had to work one year like all day two jobs and I was too lazy after work to go and it was the same I didn't really know or care at that point.
E	Male 2.1	I was sick this year.
F	Female 1.1	I didn't vote in 2008 Washington D.C. primary election. Because Washington D.C. is incredibly Democratic and I knew Barack Obama was going to get the, win the primary there and I was late for work
F	Male 2.3	And then maybe a few other times I haven't voted the outcomes were pretty established and didn't feel that my vote was gonna potentially make any difference
G	Male 2.3	I think there've been a couple years where I hadn't voted on municipal things. And it was mostly kind of the same like didn't know either the school board candidates or the local city council candidates.
G	Male 2.4	I think some years I just felt like I didn't know enough to make an educated guess as to who I would want to vote for.
G	Female 2.1	Yeah I'd agree with Male 2.4 I think if on any years that I did vote that were none general election I just didn't know what was going on and didn't try to educate myself either just kinda let it pass by
G	Male 3.1	Yeah I guess I just don't know enough about the smaller elections so I just don't vote in the city elections
G	Male 3.2	I did the same thing in 2006 and I don't vote in a city election if I don't know the issues. don't know that like in 2006 I didn't decide to not vote I just didn't make a decision, have a plan to vote
G	Male 3.3	At the time I was very new to politics and I didn't know who any of the candidates were. Yeah I was like 21 and just didn't, pretty naïve at that age and just didn't pay attention but.
G	Female 3.1	I've done the same thing especially in college I didn't pay attention either in my home town or where I went to college so it just wasn't even on my radar
G	Female 3.2	And I felt like I told them "I really don't think I have enough education to vote." And they were like "well just go do it anyway." And I was like this is like I wasn't comfortable with that idea
H	Female 3.3	I've only ever voted in general elections since I've been eligible.
H	Male 1.2	I'm only 21 and I've voted in every election since I was 18. Question doesn't really apply to me.

Coding Categories

- A Legal Barriers
- B Inconvenient
- C Peers Didn't Vote
- D Didn't care
- E Health Issues
- F Uncompetitive Election
- G Uninformed
- H Never Missed an Election

Focus Groups

Question 4. Before deciding to vote, do you consult with anyone? If so, who?

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
A	Male 1.1	I think the only election that I had any sort of consulting was the 2010 governor primary between Dayton and Kelliher I was just really torn on who to vote for so I wanted to get people sort of take on the candidates I think I did a lot when I first started voting I asked my parents especially. Because I was voting at home while I was away at home while I was away for college so I would absentee vote and I didn't know what was going on especially in that area when I wasn't living there.
A	Female 2.1	No
B	Female 1.1	No
B	Female 1.2	Yes, my parents more of just to get a feel of who their voting for and why. It may not necessarily influence my decision but just to confer with them
C	Male 1.2	I think I asked my mom sometimes but she's very secretive so it's not very helpful. I guess she doesn't want me to know.
C	Male 2.2	What my wife and what my friend said actually was what changed my mind or rather got me in the persuadable universe. That was huge and very influential
C/D	Male 3.4	Again you know I try to like even in city elections, and I admit that I'm not the most active in city elections as I probably wish I would be. But you know I think, like trying to kind of change our minds about a candidate at the same time. I think it would only have to be a really select group of friends or like parents that I really hold their opinion highly or respect. You know it's not just your voting for this candidate it's that friends A, B, and C supports this candidate and I want to go with them, cause I like them. I think friend and influential peers are huge social engines.
C/D	Male 3.1	I guess I would say I don't really consult with people whether or not I'm going to vote unless it is a small election and somebody's like brining a candidate they care about to my attention. If like somebody I know well really cares about a candidate I will look into it, kind of out of interest but it has to be you know be someone I know pretty well.
C/D	Female 3.1	Yes on school board and judicial races, especially for judicial races I rely heavily on my lawyer friends. And pretty much vote how they tell me to vote with almost no research that's pretty much the only race where I don't do or don't know enough where I feel like I have to ask somebody else
D	Male 2.3	I think that general conversations with friends might inform my decisions. But I wouldn't seek out consultation with my friends about it.
D	Female 3.2	I don't know if consult is the right word but I definitely talk to people. But not like "do you think I should vote for candidate A or candidate B." but more just talking about maybe a speech or the issue or whatever.
D	Female 3.3	And then colleagues and friends that you know also work in the political world that you know, know things about the candidates and have opinions about them
D	Male 3.2	I mean when it comes to like municipal elections or county elections or primary's. Elections where there are many candidates with whom I generally align as far as any given like ideaolegous that I've used I look to political organizations that I you know have some kind of affinity for.
E	Male 3.2	Also I see who a labor union or another organization that I also have an affinity for is supporting. I look to see what their campaigning for
E	Male 3.4	

Coding Categories

Voter Choice

A Advice

B NO

C Family

D Friends

Political

E Influencers

F Talk Politics

Focus Groups

Question 5. Do you have conversations with friends and family about voting? If so, who?

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
?	Female 1.4	No response
?	Male 2.1	No Response
?	Female 2.1	No response
A	Female 1.2	I only discuss with close friends and I actively avoid conversations with family For me it's probably mainly friends, my family just not necessarily that many conversations. And my conversation with friends I think varies. Cause I have some friends that are all the way on the boycott all elections side. Which, I disagree with so those are interesting conversations
A	Male 1.1	Same here and its intentional conversation that sometimes you wish you wouldn't be engaged in
B	Male 1.2	I have conversations with friends and family
B	Female 1.3	Yes, just through work I do a lot of electoral stuff but to your question about friends and family. Friends that I know that live in the same city, the greater New Brighton, karaoke circuit. I try to encourage as many people to vote as possible. You know one thing to is if you want to add, I don't know if it constitutes talking to folks but I also do a lot of blasts on social media to try and get people to vote.
B	Male 2.3	I will not have like when they're the opposite party as me.
B	Male 2.4	Yeah, for my friends and family I will have partisan conversations.
B	Male 2.4	I talked about the candidates with my friends and family like all the time. But I mean it's never whether or not to vote. I mean we just kind of run in the same friend group and most of our friends vote so it's kinda hard to say I'm going to persuade somebody to, when most the people I know do
B	Male 3.1	I think certainly in presidential elections especially when that's kinda heating up.
B	Male 3.3	Often have unintentional conversations that I would prefer to avoid but get brought into. I don't actively discuss politics with people they discuss it with me. friends that have strong, differing opinions than I do and know that and that's why they do it, because their jerks.
C	Female 1.1	I would agree with that there's certain friends of mine who I just don't talk about politics just because I know it's not going to go well
C	Male 2.2	Yeah like I don't know I never really actually interested me I hadn't thought about it to be honest. I actually try to, like I mostly avoid those conversations because most people that I know are going to vote or not vote regardless of whether or not I tell them to.
C	Male 3.2	I think I might be a little bit of an outlier in that I have the friend group that I've met through my husband and then my friend group from before that. In my friends through my husband I think they mostly all vote. In my other friend group I have no idea cause we don't talk about it and I think some of them probably do but not all and I wouldn't pressure them to do so. It just wouldn't come up
C	Female 3.1	We kinda forced ourselves to go vote together neither wanted to this year. Not that we didn't want to but it was like 7 o'clock or right before they closed or whatever, and we did not want to go vote but we kinda pressured each other into it.
D	Female 2.2	Parents, but not so much about current voting behavior. I mean no I haven't. I know when I was a kid they voted I don't know about before I had memories of whether they voted.
D	Male 3.4	On election day usually I'm pretty bored because most of my work is done so I sit on Facebook and just like message people whom I not, I don't have a strong read on if they're going to vote or not say "hey you should go vote today, its really important."
E	Male 3.3	At work I talked about it and I do not work in the political realm so on Election Day we talked about "Hey are you gonna vote today." And what all the races were but nothing really specific or no one was like "oh my god you're not going to vote you need to go vote." To the person who said "no." it was just general casual conversation so it does come up.
F	Female 3.1	I don't really know if most of my friends vote or not I guess I would just assume but I can't really remember having like specific conversations about the election or anything like that or leading up to an election. I can't really remember a time when I was specifically talking to my friends about their voting habits but my parents I know vote and that's always you know been more obvious to me
G	Female 3.2	Yeah I feel the same way with a lot of my friends I would maybe assume that they vote but we, or maybe not but don't really talk about it. I think that in the 2014 election like working on the official side of the candidate no one would have talked to me about not voting or any of it. I just feel like no one would've really wanted to go there.
G	Female 3.3	

Coding Categories
A Close Friends
B Friends and Family
C Avoid Talking to Friends and Family
D Family
E Facebook Friends
F Acquaintances and Coworkers
G No

Focus Groups

Question 6. On a similar note, do you engage in voting conversations on social media platforms? (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Etc)? Why or why not?

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
?	Female 1.4	No response
A	Male 3.1	I used to.
A	Female 1.1	I actively avoid it. I'll get angry about something someone posted and just choose not to engage. See that's exactly why I avoid it because I have friends and family that very opposite ends of the spectrum and don't want to get in it. Definitely Not. Just avoid the controversy especially on social media where I don't feel like you can have quite the meaningful conversation.
A	Female 1.2	The same (with female 2.2).
A	Male 2.2	I totally agree, I don't because I don't feel like I agree with people on Facebook. And I know a lot of my Facebook friends would argue with me so I just try to avoid that.
A	Female 2.1	No. Because I just do Facebook and I don't like to get political on Facebook. And I don't like when people like make long like huge arguments and I feel like anything you post on Facebook you're at risk for having like this huge like comment spree. And I love to read them on other peoples but I don't want them on my wall.
A	Female 2.2	No, I think it all its so time consuming like I mean if it gets so heated and you wanna like form you know an informed argument I mean that's time consuming and more than likely you're not going to change that persons mind over Facebook.
A	Male 3.4	Take a photo of the "I voted" sticker.
B	Female 1.1	No. Yeah I do that "I voted" sticker every time.
B	Male 1.2	But I wear the sticker or would say I voted on Facebook if I wanted to but I don't think I would say who.
B	Female 2.2	I mean I think on Election Day I'll probably say something like "get your ass out and vote." Or something like that just because that's what people do. But for the most part like I very, very rarely engage in any social media conversations about politics.
B	Male 3.3	Or read articles that other people share but I just typically don't comment back or post anything of my own other than I might say I voted or something like that on an election day.
B	Female 3.1	Once a Year. Reasons for doing so: To make an attempt to educate other knowing that it isn't going to matter in the end but you know you do what you can and that's one way to. I can probably say the times I've engaged in those conversations on social media I have about 100% regret in doing so do it. I will encourage people to go vote in general.
C	Male 1.1	I will share articles that have a partisan lean to them like this happened which like obviously it's from this mind set and if people start like creating a thread comment I will actually delete a post. But most the time during voting season I will just share GOTV which is non-partisan
C	Male 2.1	I'll post about issues if I'm going to post anything but it's not something to do with voting yes or no, or this candidate that candidate.
C	Male 3.2	Very, very rare, rarely anymore I just you know, I don't know if on social media I've ever changed anybody's mind. I mean it, if it's something that's really, really burning me I might put a blurb on there but unlikely.
C	Male 3.3	I'm not unwilling to use Facebook to state what my position is on something I'm just not it's not in a debate way for example like before the marriage vote a lot of people changed their profile pictures to relate to that and I did to. But I wasn't really in a debate fashion pretty much, was just a statement about how I felt. Facebook doesn't affect the likelihood I'll go out and vote.
C	Female 3.3	I think probably about 75% of the stuff I post on social media is political or have a political bent. With the other 15% is probably twins. I'm perfectly willing to engage in any discussion about politics on Facebook. This is kind of a follow up I would say that like sometimes employment where I've worked has kind of made me be less partisan
D	Male 2.3	A little bit. I have this fantasy that; I can bring people together who are on different sides.
D	Female 1.3	I would agree with a lot that's been said, rather than like engaging in dialogue I do a lot of following. Like ill follow a candidate or party or whatever. However, if you see that 10 of your friends voted you might realize wow there's an election today and I should go vote. Because before I met my husband I didn't pay attention to all these things and I could've been more informed. And now I'm very well informed of when elections are and what is on the ballots.
E	Female 3.1	I might use social media to like look into a candidate or an issue or like read articles that other people post or post an article not very often but occasionally. But I never really debate anyone about anything on Facebook or engage in sort of a discussion because I don't think that anyone who is gonna be willing to engage in conversation is persuadable at all.
E	Female 3.2	

Coding Categories
A Actively Avoid/Don't
B General GOTV Posts
C Educate Others
D Debate on Social Media
E Passively Follow
E Conversations

Focus Groups

Question 7. If you do have voting related conversations on social media, are you more likely to have them with close friends and family or acquaintances?

Coding Categories

A Friends and Family

B Everyone

C Acquaintances

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
A	Female 1.2	I would agree. (With Male 1.1)
A	Male 1.1	People I see, people I interact with on a few times a week at least. Family and closer friends'but not necessarily on social media. I do very little interactions with people on
A	Female 1.3	Only very close friends, as in 2 maybe 3 max.
A	Male 2.4	I think there is a slight preference for folks that I know when commenting
A	Female 2.1	I don't think it makes me shy away from people I don't know or friends of the person that maybe posted something. But I think I'm more likely to comment on something especially
B	Male 1.2	It would often be with people who would either ask or bring it up, brought it up in conversation
B	Male 2.3	I'd say the only time I probably don't engage much is for my family that lives out of state. I don't really engage much in those kinds of things but I'm perfectly willing for friends or
C	Male 2.2	A few I will have is with acquaintances like if it's somebody that I like through a string know I will have an argument with them. But if it's like a family member I'm just going to

Focus Groups

Question 8. Where does your primary source of information about the importance of voting come from?

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
A	Female 1.1	My parents I mean that's both my parents I always went with them to vote growing up and that's just you know engrained it's something that you do.
A	Female 1.2	I would say my step-mom who's actually involved in local politics then I exposed more to the concept of that
A	Female 1.4	My parents I mean that's both my parents I always went with them to vote growing up and that's just you know engrained it's something that you do.
A	Male 2.1	Yeah the same parents.
A	Male 2.3	I think parents were.
A	Male 2.4	Yeah I was going to say parents.
A	Female 2.1	Yeah my parents were definitely a strong influence to vote. They always made a big deal about voting and would take use with to do the kids vote stuff and always encouraged me to vote even when I was in college.
A	Female 2.2	first of all probably my parents they would always vote and just encouraged me when I could to vote Family big for me, I mean I remember going to the polls with my parents when I was younger and it's just my mom helped me get my first absentee ballot when I wanted to vote for the first when I was in college so I don't know I'd say that probably has a lot to do with it.
A	Female 3.3	Monty at Metro.
B	Female 1.2	Monty yeah right tried to stay as disengaged as I could but he wouldn't let me. Local legislators in there like that I have a personal relationship with can look to them for some insight as well.
B	Male 1.1	Yeah it would probably be class in school. My parents didn't talk about voting, elections, who they voted for, political affiliations anything throughout my whole life.
B	Male 1.2	We had classes in school that taught about voting.
B	Male 2.1	Various higher education professors for me.
B	Male 2.2	I guess I'd have to echo that same thing you know I think that going to college and having those initial conversations about it probably inspired me to vote.
B	Male 3.3	Or just education in general learning about voting in school is actually remember able to me like doing a mock election in high school when we couldn't actually vote yet and who won in our high school.
B	Female 3.3	The Secretary of State's office is a resource of that for me a little bit, to see whose running on like the lower part of the ballot.
C	Female 1.3	Yeah I agree secretary's office to get yeah, to get more information about the detail.
C	Male 1.2	And MTV I guess when I was younger. It was definitely an influence back then.
D	Male 2.4	Other than MTV for me?
D	Female 2.2	Generally speaking you know any web based news association or newspaper.
D	Male 3.1	The news.
D	Female 3.2	My life experiences and socialization factors.
E	Male 3.2	But yeah it's just you know life experiences and socialization. So I'm seeking it out but, the news doesn't really influence me a lot one way or another.
E	Male 3.3	Yeah and then just you know life experiences stacking up that made me who I am today
E	Male 3.4	I mean like my parents were both pretty partisan they wouldn't talk about it a lot but it was evident to me. . But like when it comes to elections I'm not decided in it like totally is what forms my opinion. Like generally I make a habit of voting any way so that's probably a given so actually seeking an answer as to who to vote for its always about like my peer group what their saying to me unsolicited or solicited or on Facebook or whatever like you know. Kinda like whose on what team and then I pick the team I like better, also I like being on the winning team too
F	Male 3.4	

Coding Categories

- A Parents
- B Professors/Academia
- C Organizations
- D Media
- E Life Experiences
- F Peers

Focus Groups

Question 9. More generally, who (or where) do you look when you need help making a decision?

Category Participant

Code	ID	Responses
		But then yeah definitely asking friends and family depending on what I want to know about would
A	Female 2.1	determine who I would ask.
A	Female 1.2	Friends and family.
		I don't know if I do this every time but I feel like I should. I mean when you have something that you want and good opinion for seek out a non biased opinion. Whether true or not like you certainly could be biased about something if I brought it to you so bring it to my parents or a friend or somebody who I think would give me solid honest advice I think that probably is the best answer whether or not it's true or not I'm not sure.
A	Male 3.4	
		I guess it depends on like the scope of the decision you're trying to make. I was more thinking like a life changing decision like that I'm gonna start with you know husband, parents, friends whoever. I think sometimes to you go to the person who you think will give you the answer that you want to hear.
A	Female 3.1	I hate to sound cheesy but I mean first and foremost I go to my wife. If I need some advice or guidance on something, and then I'll probably go to like close friends or like professors or people that I respect a lot
A	Male 3.1	and admire their opinions and what not.
		Very close friends and family. When purchasing a house you know I consulted my family. And I kinda
A	Female 1.1	wasn't kidding about a therapist. No but I think that kind of unbiased opinion is helpful a lot of times
		Yeah I would agree I'd go to my spouse first and then you know depending on what it is my parents, my siblings, maybe a colleague if it's you know a professional kind of decision someone there I whose advice I
A	Female 3.3	trust. Friends you know the typical people.
B	Male 3.2	Google is useful
B	Male 2.2	Google, Internet.
B	Female 1.2	I go online if I'm looking for a car.
		I kind of do all the normal things and then if all else fails I'll try googling just about anything you know. Like should I go to grad school? Google search there's usually a couple helpful articles where people have discussed the pros and cons of every possible decision so Google always helps if you don't want to have to
B	Female 3.2	ask anyone.
B	Male 2.1	Publications like the Economist and other magazines. Also Academia.
		The go to generally is the internet and just kind of amalgamation of what I can gather is the best result or best identifier. Other things if I know someone that's kind of an expert or has some familiarity with
B	Male 2.3	whatever I'm trying to decide then I'd probably go to them
C	Female 2.2	Friends
		Friends more so than family. Purchases will always find somebody to tell me what I should buy because I
C	Male 1.2	don't like making purchases.
		I think my parents are still the person I would go to for guidance. Or like you said if I know some
D	Male 2.4	specifically that has a good knowledge of the subject but parents are a good default usually.
D	Male 2.2	Parents,
		I would also add like if I know somebody who's had experience in that situation and whether they've been successful, unsuccessful or neutral I will probably go to that person. To get and if it's somebody that I
E	Male 3.2	respect enough I'll probably go to that person as well
		Generally like I mean it seems obvious but I try to find people who I think will have the best answer or like
E	Male 3.2	the most informed answer right.
		Sometimes I like to bring a decision to somebody who's really outside a situation and who maybe doesn't
F	Male 3.3	already know what I'm hoping their going to say.

Coding Categories

- A Friends and Family
- B Online Sources/Publications
- C Friends
- D Family
- E Experts
- F Acquaintances

Focus Groups

Question 10. Is there one person you look to for advice on voting and other important issues? If so, who?

Category	Participant	
Code	ID	Responses
A	Female 1.2	Significant other.
B	Female 1.1	Well I just kinda do it.
B	Male 1.1	Usually people are asking me for that advice.
B	Male 3.3	It's your vote not their vote you figure it out make up your mind
C	Male 2.1	If I'm asking people or if I need to ask somebody I'm just going to ask a multitude of anyone I can get my hands on.
C	Female 2.1	No, I go to multiple people. I like to listen to people's opinions on certain people. And I like to google things and do like my own research on the candidate before I
C	Female 2.2	make a decision because I think people are really biased to who they want I want lots of responses from lots of people and lots of defenses from those positions so I can like actually try and figure out like why I
C	Male 3.2	should vote for this candidate or any of the others right, there's not a one person like that actually makes me uncomfortable.
C	Female 3.3	No, because it's just more about me than one other person.
D	Male 2.3	I guess I'll vote pretty much any democrat unless I find that they're a bad person or think that.
E	Male 3.4	Yeah there's certain writers that I mean put a lot of trust into, their observations.

Coding Categories

- A Significant Other
- B Myself
- C Multiple people
- D Similar Politics
- E Media Opinion Leaders
- F Acquaintances

Focus Groups

Question 11. Are you more or less likely to vote if one of your friends and family asks you to?

Category	Participant	
Code	ID	Responses
A	Male 1.1	I'd say more.
A	Male 2.1	More
A	Male 2.3	More
A	Male 2.4	More
A	Female 2.1	More
A	Female 2.2	More
A	Male 3.2	I would say more likely, probably marginally in most elections but more likely
A	Male 3.3	Yeah even more likely. I would say more likely it depends like my husband makes me go to conventions now. I would have never even considered to that
A	Female 3.1	before but for my marriage I do it I would say like neutral if it's a statewide or even like state level. But if it's a city level election or similar then if somebody asked me their probably working for somebody specific and so I would be more likely because it's really important to them. And if I care about
A	Female 3.3	that person and their working for you know a candidate or probably volunteering at that level I will take it into consideration. I would say if family is encouraging me to vote it's usually for a particular or party which I do not identify with so if anything its actually
B	Female 1.2	detering for them to recommend that.
C	Male 3.1	Neutral, I was probably always going to vote.
C	Female 1.1	I guess if they asked me to my response would be "I'm going to anyway."
C	Male 3.4	I guess I would concede like neutral I think I'd influence some of my friends to vote. But I probably will always be voting in every election I can. Unless my friends there all
D	Male 1.2	boycott elections and convince me to join them which I could see happen.

Coding Categories

- A More
- B Less
- C No effect
- D I influence others

Focus Groups

Question 12. Are you more likely to vote because of a political party or candidate asks you too or because a friend, family member, or coworker asks you too?

Category Participant

Code ID Responses

A	Female 1.2	I mean I guess the political party I don't really listen to my family on political issues or friends.
A	Male 1.2	I'm very similar (to female 1.2) as well.
A	Male 2.3	Party, Candidate
A	Male 2.4	Candidate
A	Female 2.1	Candidate I think it depends on the type of election. Like if this is like a school board where there's a lot of different candidates or maybe it's like an open primary system where there's a lot of different candidates. I'd be more drawn to a particular candidate then I would, I'd be more interested in voting for them because of them than because of my parents, family or whatever party they you know would have like me to that's the best I could articulate it.
A	Male 3.2	So I think I can't help but think of the question as what motivates you more. Like to me it's like the candidate or the issue or the party.
A	Female 3.3	It's not my friends and family who are motivating me.
B	Male 3.2	I think that on the occasion that I have not, not decided to vote. Its friends or family recommend me that I should vote. Definitely friend, family member, coworker. I think a friend or family member would motivate me more to vote not necessarily for someone. And a candidate would influence me to vote for them or against them. Not just to vote as much as a friend or family member would have.
B	Male 3.3	I think a friend or family member would be more likely to convince me. Because I see my friends, family, and coworkers all the time. I will probably never see this candidate again. So they can hold me more accountable to do it. And if a friend, family member or coworker give me an opinion on someone then that's probably an opinion that have formed from as someone I trust versus what a candidate has been told to tell me. So I'm going to pay more attention to it.
B	Female 3.1	It wouldn't make me more likely to vote. But I think if a candidate knocked on my door and I you know believed in their political affiliation I would be more likely to vote for them.
C	Female 1.1	
C	Male 3.4	Sometimes it's something a candidate says that will motivate me to not vote for them. If it's like a primary or a not even something they said maybe something they did in the past. And but I know that and I'll hold it against them and find a different candidate.
D	Female 1.4	I'm thinking back to my, the first election I was able to vote in was 2002 and I was living in Iowa and I couldn't even tell you who it was that came and knocked on my door and talked to me and I wasn't planning on voting, but I did because he came and talked to me and I voted for him. Now I think my spouse would have more influence on my decision than anybody else at this point
D	Male 3.1	Like I didn't stumble into something to have a candidate say "oh go vote." I'm like "oh yes I will now." I was already on board. The candidate like at the door well a candidate at the door is very effective like if I don't know who they are previously and they come off really well.

Coding Categories

- A Candidate
- B Friend, Family, or Coworker (strong ties)
- C Choice Effected By Candidate
- D Equal Effect

Focus Groups

Question 13. Is there anything else you would like to add about your decision to vote or not vote?

Category Code	Participant ID	Responses
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?	Male 3.3	Yeah it'd be really interesting like if first time voter they've been eligible before but their still like in maybe they're in their late 20's now like what got them to vote
A	Male 3.1	I just see myself voting you know almost out of habit for the rest of my life
A	Female 1.1	I just feel guilty when I don't vote. And I'm strait ticket I wish I was someone that did a lot of research. You know particular letter behind their name I'll vote for them.
A	Female 3.2	I would agree with that I think a lot of people feel that way. Like once you're a "voter" your just kinda set you know that your gonna vote you just need to make a decision on you know what your voting for who your voting for. And just looking ta like the title here, social networks and voting behavior. I think about it like your personal family friend's social network rather than like the online social network. Like I think the smaller network impacts my voting than the bigger network just to sum it up.
A	Male 3.2	Once you start voting you vote pretty much pretty regularly within the confines in which you regularly vote. Like maybe you're a general election only voter etc. and then you stick with that behavior until the last election of your last time
A	Male 2.2	Say I guess from my perceptive like just me growing up and voting. Like voting is; like something that you just ritually do every two years. It's like filing your taxes like whether you like it or dislike it you just do it. From my perceptive that's how voting is, it's like I don't think should I go vote? It's like okay when is voting and where do I go? Even if I don't feel like I am informed I should still vote just because that's something I still have to do
B	Male 2.4	I feel like I've moved around quite a bit so if I had like a city or a town that was my own. Those smaller elections I would probably be more inclined to go out especially in thinking of like having a family in the future
B	Male 2.1	That I think if I settled down somewhere I think I'd be a lot more likely to get more information those smaller races
C	Female 1.3	If I do my research I'm significantly more likely to vote so it's more putting my own time to research the candidates and the issues. I wouldn't just go in and check a box for someone based on their political party. I would prefer to do it (the research myself) just if they even if they came knocking on my door I still want to know more than what their willing tell me I wouldn't necessarily trust it coming just from them.
C	Male 2.3	That you know it you know take like municipal, New Brighton municipal elections with what about 10% of the people vote for city council or you know local government the school board those kinds of things. And every vote you know is pretty much amplified because so few people actually do it. And I wish people engaged more with their community and understood the issues of how their government works. You know I think we'd have a better democracy and a better community and ultimately states and then ultimately country if people were more engaged. As it's one of our few options other than direct lobbying with legislators or elected officials. It's pretty much the only other option you have to, to really have your voice expressed in any way.
C	Male 1.2	To be an actively voting in elections is to be interested and engaged in issues and things that concern my life and that is what connected me to see the importance of voting. If somebody is disengaged and not voting then connect them to issues and candidates.
D	Female 3.1	Part of the sort of overall questions like voting decisions is I think it gets at whether or not you consider yourself identity wise as someone who votes. If you are already at that point you're not making a decision whether or not to vote. And that's like where I consider myself so it's hard to say like what influences whether or not I'm going to vote because it's already like an identity. I was thinking of a question you could ask would be. Are you usually or have you ever been really excited to vote? Because I can't say yes to that question but I think a lot of people in this room probably would. So it could be kind of for a different target audience to see
E	Male 1.1	If it was popular vote and not electoral vote I would definitely be more apt to.

Coding Categories

- A Voting is a Habit
- B Voting is a part of belonging to a community
- C Being Informed is Important
- D Voting as Identity
- E Voting Needs Reform

Appendix D Survey Questions

Voting Behavior and Social Networks

Q1 Voting Behavior Survey: Notice of Consent You are invited to take an online survey about voting behavior. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an eligible voter. I ask that you read this section before proceeding to the beginning of the survey. This survey is being conducted by Jered Weber, Strategic Communications Masters Student at the University of Minnesota Procedures:

If you agree to take this survey, I would ask you to do the following things: Answer the following questions about your voting behavior to the best of your ability. All responses will be recorded anonymously. This survey should take no more than 15 minutes of your time. Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the primary researcher and his advisors will have access to the records. Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to skip any question or exit the survey at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Jered Weber. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at 186 Summit Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55102, 701.388.7283, webe0506@umn.edu or contact Jered's advisor Steve Wehrenberg at wehre003@umn.edu or 612.625.6383. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

Q2 Are you an eligible voter?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q3 Which (if any) elections do you vote in?

- ☐ Presidential Elections (1)
- ☐ Midterm Elections (2)
- ☐ Off-Year Municipal Elections (3)
- ☐ A and B (4)
- ☐ A, B, and C (5)
- ☐ I don't vote (6)

If I don't vote Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q4 What is the primary reason you vote?

- ☐ To support a candidate or party (1)
- ☐ To fulfill my civic duty (2)
- ☐ Social approval (3)
- ☐ To make a difference (4)
- ☐ It's a habit (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

Q5 Thinking about times when you have chosen not to vote, why didn't you? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Felt Uninformed (1)
- ☐ No one else I know votes (2)
- ☐ Felt like my vote didn't matter (3)
- ☐ Didn't like the candidates (4)
- ☐ Other (5) _____

Q6 Do you discuss voting with others?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Answer If Do you discuss voting with others? Yes Is Selected

Q7 Who do you discuss voting with? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Parents (1)
- ☐ Spouse (2)
- ☐ Friends (3)
- ☐ Coworkers (4)
- ☐ Acquaintances (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

Answer If Do you discuss voting with others? Yes Is Selected

Q8 Does discussing voting make you more or less likely to vote?

- ☐ More (1)
- ☐ Less (2)
- ☐ Has no effect (3)

Q9 Are you active on social media?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Answer If Are you active on social media? Yes Is Selected

Q10 Who do you primarily engage with on Social Media?

- ☐ Friends and Family (1)
- ☐ Acquaintances (2)
- ☐ Organizations (3)
- ☐ Political Parties and Candidates (4)
- ☐ Media (e.g. CNN, Star Tribune, Etc) (5)

Answer If Are you active on social media? Yes Is Selected

Q11 How do social media posts affect whether or not you vote?

- ☐ Increases the likelihood I will vote (1)
- ☐ Decreases the likelihood I will vote (2)
- ☐ Has no effect (3)

Answer If How do social media posts affect whether or not you vote? Increases the likelihood I will vote Is Selected

Q12 How do social media posts about voting increase the likelihood you will vote? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Help inform me about the election (1)
- ☐ Make me feel guilty about not voting (2)
- ☐ Remind me to vote (3)
- ☐ Other (4) _____

Answer If How do social media posts affect whether or not you vote? Decreases the likelihood I will vote Is Selected

Q13 How do social media posts about voting decrease the likelihood you will vote? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Annoy me so much I just stop caring (1)
- ☐ Make me feel uninformed (2)
- ☐ Other (3) _____

Q14 Is there one person or entity you usually look to for voting related information?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q15 Who do you look to most regularly for voting related information?

- ☐ Media (1)
- ☐ Parents (2)
- ☐ Spouse (3)
- ☐ Civic Organizations (4)
- ☐ Community Leaders (5)
- ☐ Party or Candidate (6)
- ☐ Other (7) _____

Q16 Where did you first learn the importance of voting? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Parents (1)
- ☐ College Professor (2)
- ☐ Media (3)
- ☐ High School Teacher (4)
- ☐ Party or Candidate (5)
- ☐ Civic Organization (6)
- ☐ Community Leader (7)
- ☐ Other (8) _____

Q17 Do you encourage others to vote?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Answer If Do you encourage others to vote? Yes Is Selected

Q18 Who are you more likely to encourage to vote?

- ☐ Close friends and family (1)
- ☐ Acquaintances (2)
- ☐ Everyone (3)

Answer If Do you encourage others to vote? Yes Is Selected

Q19 Are you more or less likely to encourage someone to vote if contacted by a candidate or party?

- ☐ More (1)
- ☐ Less (2)
- ☐ The Same (3)

Q20 Are you more likely to vote if asked by a close family/friend or by a candidate/party?

- ☐ Family/Friend (1)
- ☐ Candidate/Party (2)
- ☐ Both have an equal effect (3)

Q21 Gender: What is your gender?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Other (3)
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer (4)

Q22 Age: What is your age?

- ☐ 18-24 (1)
- ☐ 25-34 (2)
- ☐ 35-44 (3)
- ☐ 45-54 (4)
- ☐ 55-64 (5)
- ☐ 65-74 (6)
- ☐ 75 or older (7)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (8)

Q23 Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino (2)
- ☐ Black or African American (3)
- ☐ Native American or American Indian (4)
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Other (6)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (7)

Q24 Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- ☐ High School Diploma or Equivalent (1)
- ☐ Some College, but no degree (2)
- ☐ Associate Degree (3)
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree (4)
- ☐ Master's Degree (5)
- ☐ Professional Degree (6)
- ☐ Doctorate Degree (7)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (8)

Q25 Marital Status: What is your marital status?

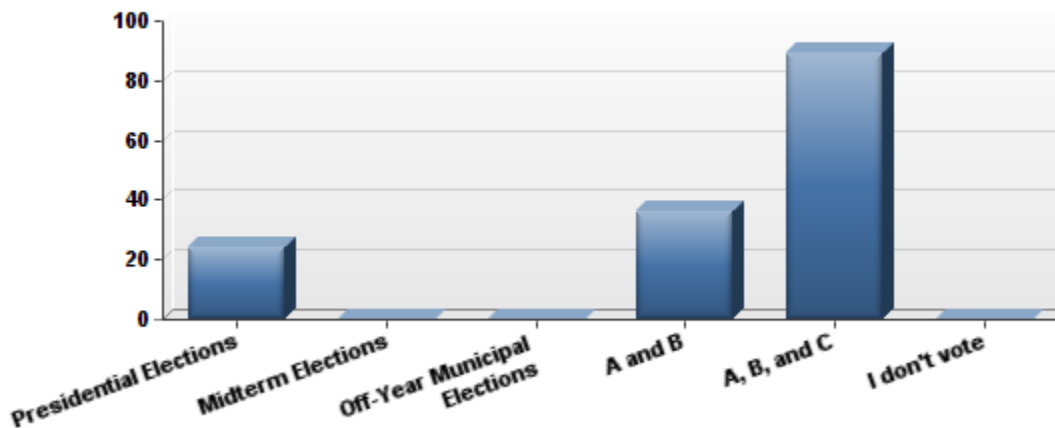
- ☐ Single, never married (1)
- ☐ Married or domestic partnership (2)
- ☐ Widowed (3)
- ☐ Divorced (4)
- ☐ Separate (5)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (6)

Appendix E Survey Results

Survey Report

Last Modified: 06/20/2015

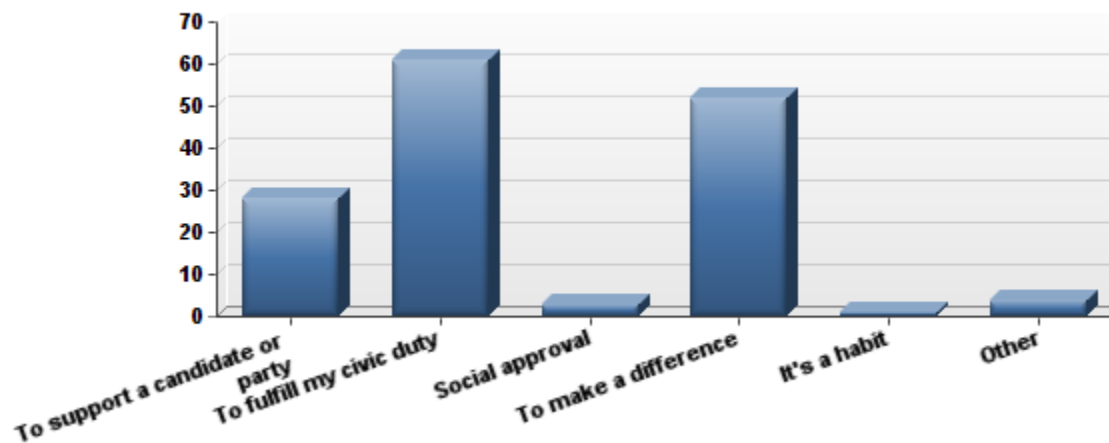
1. Which (if any) elections do you vote in?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Presidential Elections	24	16%
2	Midterm Elections	0	0%
3	Off-Year Municipal Elections	0	0%
4	A and B	36	24%
5	A, B, and C	89	60%
6	I don't vote	0	0%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	4.11
Variance	2.05
Standard Deviation	1.43
Total Responses	149

2. What is the primary reason you vote?



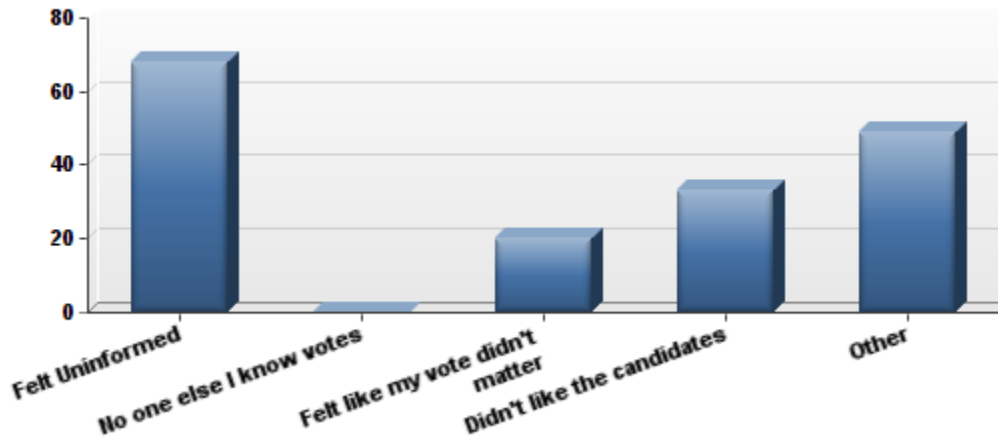
#	Answer		Response	%
1	To support a candidate or party	<div></div>	28	19%
2	To fulfill my civic duty	<div></div>	61	41%
3	Social approval	<div></div>	3	2%
4	To make a difference	<div></div>	52	35%
5	It's a habit	<div></div>	1	1%
6	Other	<div></div>	4	3%
	Total		149	100%

Other

Both to support candidate and party and also fullfill my civic duty - in general, both are major motivators
 To advocate my personal views
 To support the issues I believe in.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	2.66
Variance	1.67
Standard Deviation	1.29
Total Responses	149

3. Thinking about times when you have chosen not to vote, why didn't you? (Choose all that apply)

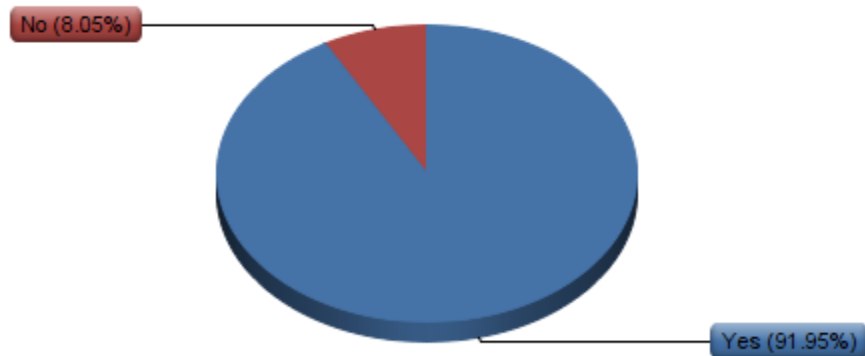


#	Answer		Response	%
1	Felt Uninformed	<div></div>	68	48%
2	No one else I know votes		0	0%
3	Felt like my vote didn't matter	<div></div>	20	14%
4	Didn't like the candidates	<div></div>	33	23%
5	Other	<div></div>	49	35%

Other
Didn't find the time
I always vote
Forgot to vote early, wasn't in the state.
There was only one race, an unchallenged incumbent.
always vote
There have only been 2 presidential elections since I've been old enough to vote.
I have never chosen not to vote.
busy
I've never not voted
always voted
Was out of town and didn't plan ahead
I have voted in all presidential elections. I don't feel that voting in midterm elections effects me.
Forgot
i did not know i could leave work to vote.
was moving weeks later and didn't feel right voting for local officials
I was ill.
Have always voted
line was too long to wait
Scheduling conflict
was absentee and did not get my ballot in time
Lack of time
I have never chosen not to vote
Out of town
Always vote
cannot remember the last time I didn't vote
Difficult to get to the polls on Election Day (travel, etc) and didn't plan to get an absentee ballot
Always vote
Unsure when off cycle elections held
I have never missed an election
Never not voted
I was working
out of state
I have voted in every election since I was 18
Time
I was I'll.
I have never missed any vote. including primaries.
I've voted every year since I was eligible
I always vote.
Forgot, like school board
Forgot to register
I have never skipped voting
could not make it
I've never not voted

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Total Responses	141

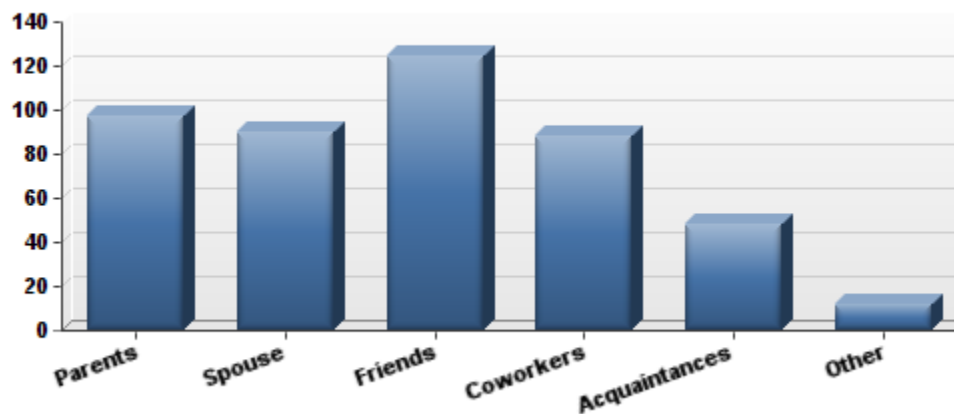
4. Do you discuss voting with others?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	137	92%
2	No	12	8%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.08
Variance	0.07
Standard Deviation	0.27
Total Responses	149

5. Who do you discuss voting with? (Choose all that apply)



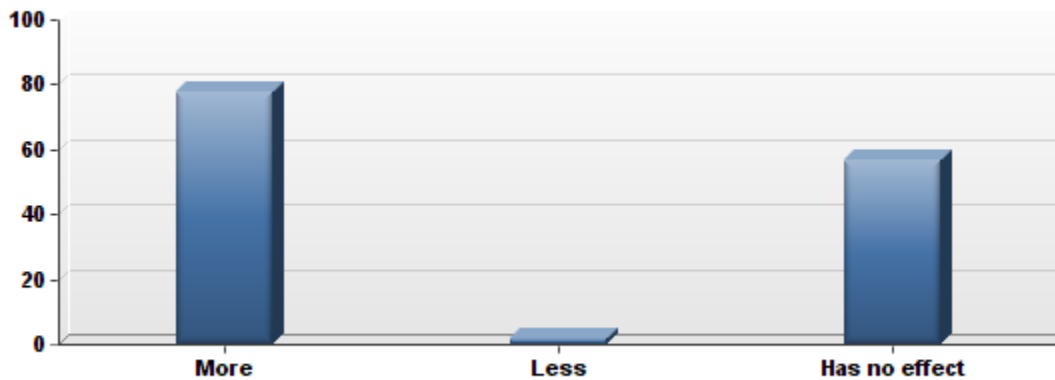
#	Answer	Response	%
1	Parents	97	71%
2	Spouse	90	66%
3	Friends	125	91%
4	Coworkers	88	64%
5	Acquaintances	48	35%
6	Other	12	9%

Other

Goddamn, everyone!
 Pretty much anyone that'll talk to me about voting.
 Anyone
 Son
 My kids
 people i represent
 everyone
 children
 all
 Siblings
 Children
 siblings

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	137

6. Does discussing voting make you more or less likely to vote?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	More	78	57%
2	Less	2	1%
3	Has no effect	57	42%
	Total	137	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.85
Variance	0.97
Standard Deviation	0.98
Total Responses	137

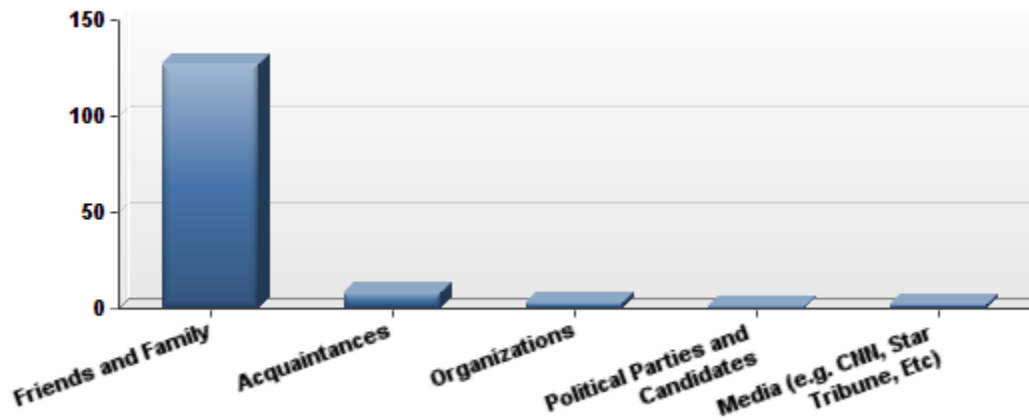
7. Are you active on social media?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		141	95%
2	No		8	5%
	Total		149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.05
Variance	0.05
Standard Deviation	0.23
Total Responses	149

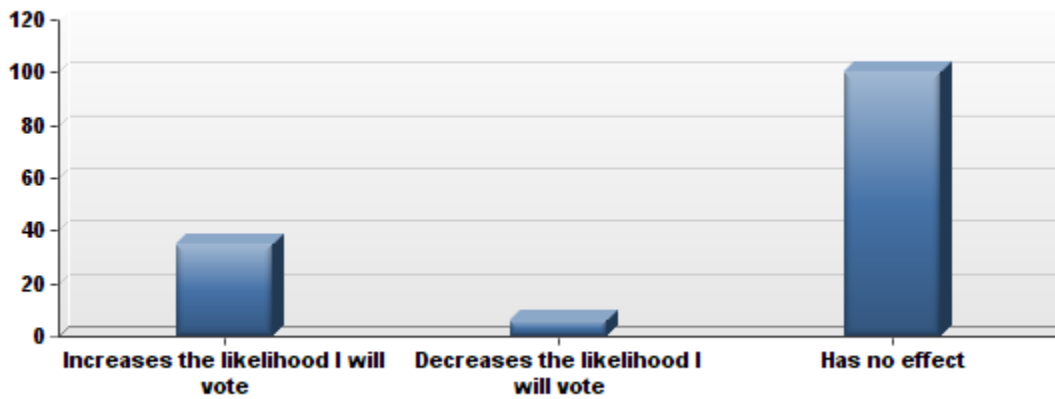
8. Who do you primarily engage with on Social Media?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Friends and Family		127	90%
2	Acquaintances		8	6%
3	Organizations		3	2%
4	Political Parties and Candidates		1	1%
5	Media (e.g. CNN, Star Tribune, Etc)		2	1%
	Total		141	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	1.18
Variance	0.40
Standard Deviation	0.64
Total Responses	141

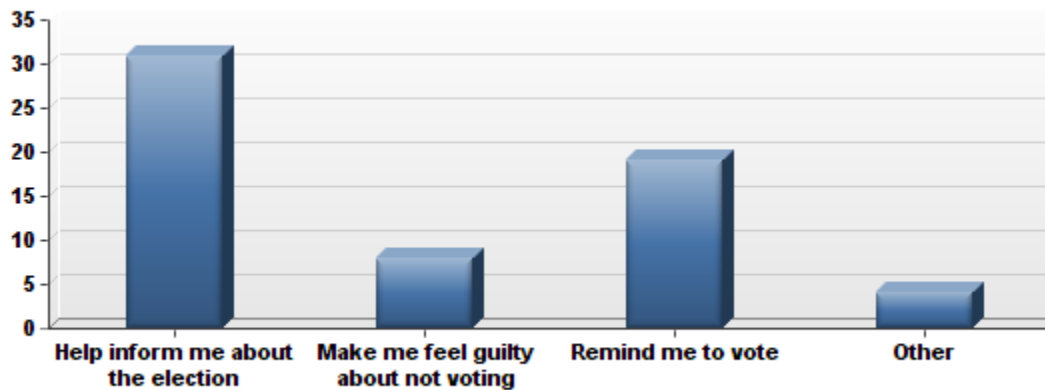
9. How do social media posts affect whether or not you vote?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Increases the likelihood I will vote	<div></div>	35	25%
2	Decreases the likelihood I will vote	<div></div>	6	4%
3	Has no effect	<div></div>	100	71%
	Total		141	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.46
Variance	0.75
Standard Deviation	0.87
Total Responses	141

10. How do social media posts about voting increase the likelihood you will vote? (Choose all that apply)



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Help inform me about the election	31	89%
2	Make me feel guilty about not voting	8	23%
3	Remind me to vote	19	54%
4	Other	4	11%

Other

Remind me of the consequences of the candidate I don't vote for getting in

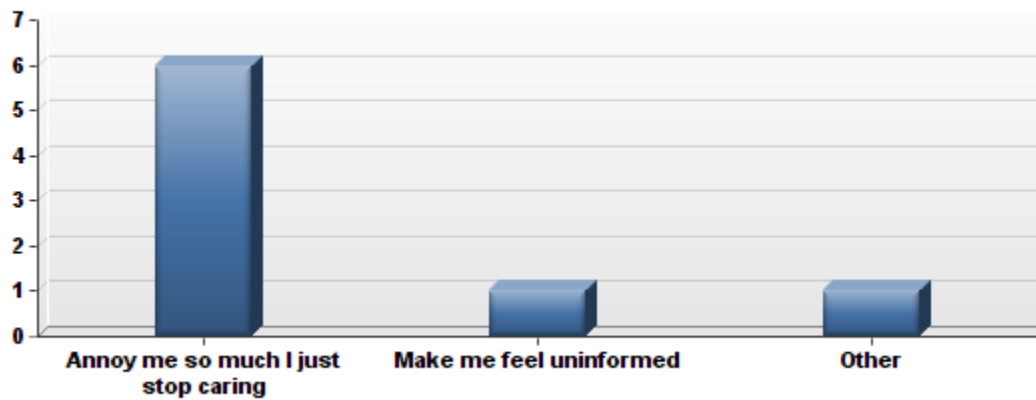
No affect - I vote anyway.

I can learn more about issues and candidates

reminds me to support the people that I agree with the most, and make sure to cancel out votes from people I don't agree with (based on their posts/updates on social media)

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Total Responses	35

11. How do social media posts about voting decrease the likelihood you will vote? (Choose all that apply)



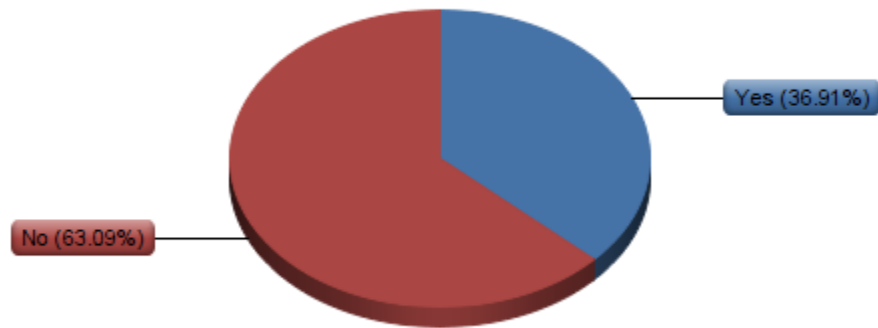
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Annoy me so much I just stop caring		6	100%
2	Make me feel uninformed		1	17%
3	Other		1	17%

Other

Make my vote feel useless amongst all the stupidity.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Total Responses	6

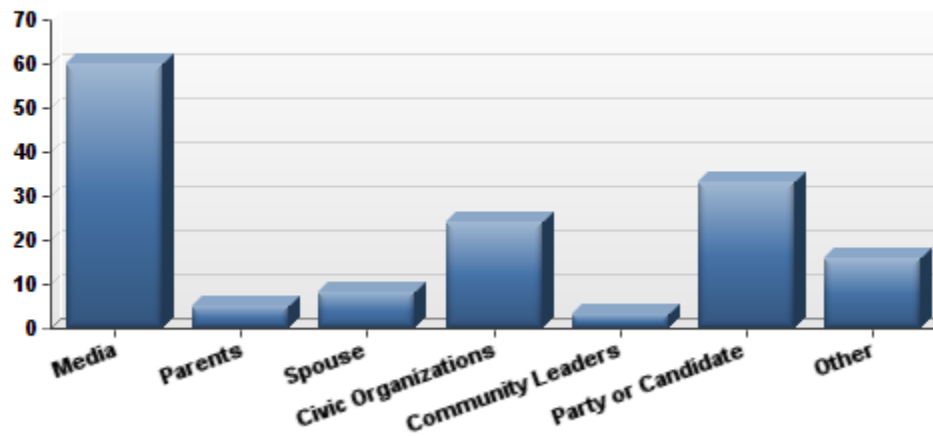
12. Is there one person or entity you usually look to for voting related information?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes	<div></div>	55	37%
2	No	<div></div>	94	63%
	Total		149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.63
Variance	0.23
Standard Deviation	0.48
Total Responses	149

13. Who do you look to most regularly for voting related information?

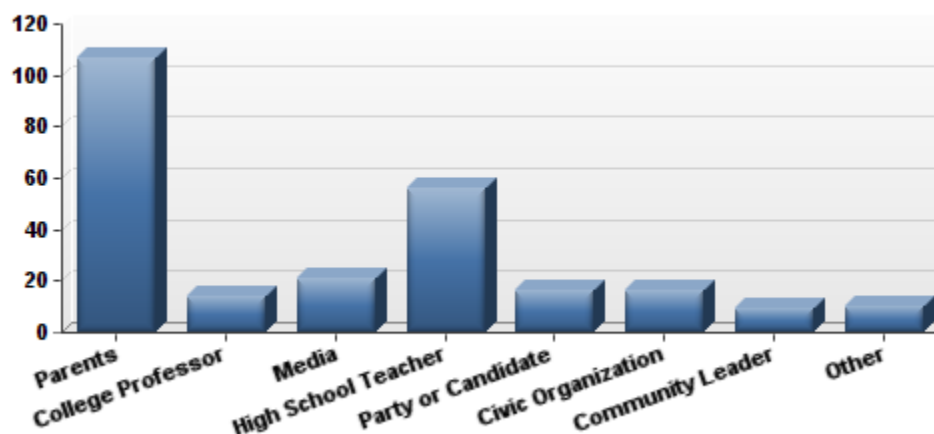


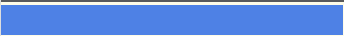







#	Answer	Response	%
1	Media	60	40%
2	Parents	5	3%
3	Spouse	8	5%
4	Civic Organizations	24	16%
5	Community Leaders	3	2%
6	Party or Candidate	33	22%
7	Other	16	11%
	Total	149	100%

Other
Public Media
All of the above
Myself
Bernie Sanders
Do my own research
Labor Unions
Friends that share the same values
secretary of states website
friends
League of Women Voters
news,press, articles
Friends

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	3.46
Variance	5.43
Standard Deviation	2.33
Total Responses	149

14. Where did you first learn the importance of voting? (Choose all that apply)



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Parents		107	72%
2	College Professor		14	9%
3	Media		21	14%
4	High School Teacher		56	38%
5	Party or Candidate		16	11%
6	Civic Organization		16	11%
7	Community Leader		9	6%
8	Other		10	7%

Other
Grandparents
Friends
Myself
School
Vietnam war movement; Common Cause, civil rights
spouse
Elementary school teacher
elementary school
you must vote if you want if you want some control of your life
Middle school civics teacher

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Total Responses	149

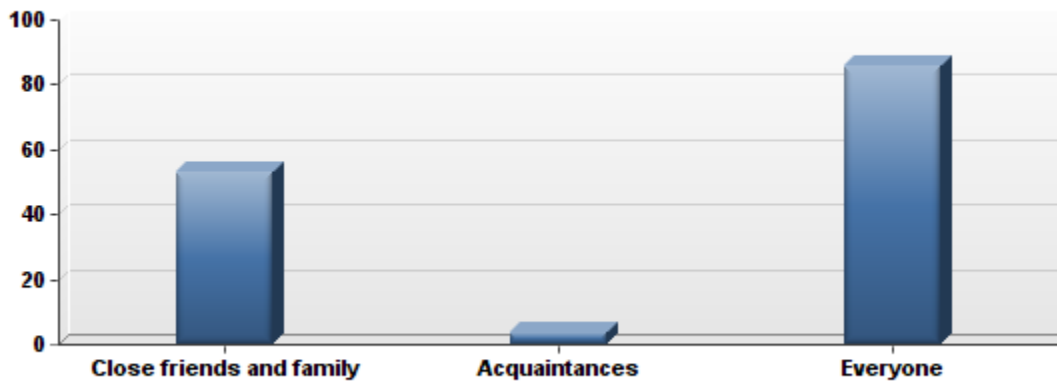
15. Do you encourage others to vote?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes	<div style="width: 96%;"></div>	143	96%
2	No	<div style="width: 4%;"></div>	6	4%
	Total		149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.04
Variance	0.04
Standard Deviation	0.20
Total Responses	149

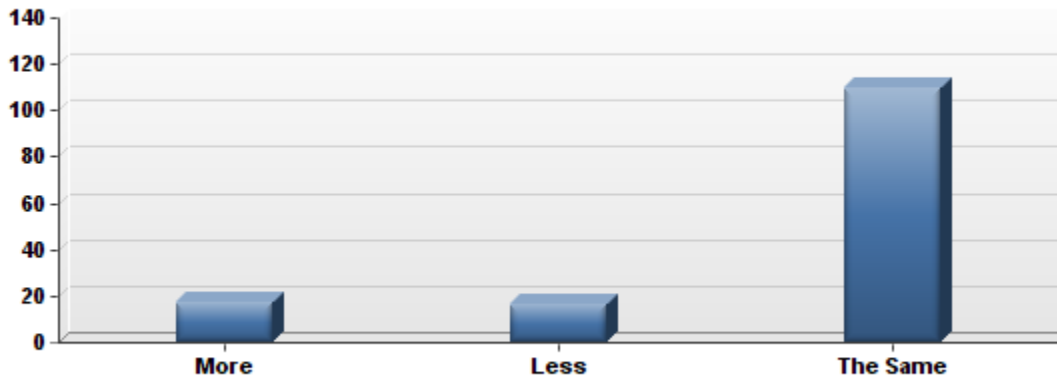
16. Who are you more likely to encourage to vote?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Close friends and family	53	37%
2	Acquaintances	4	3%
3	Everyone	86	60%
	Total	143	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.23
Variance	0.93
Standard Deviation	0.96
Total Responses	143

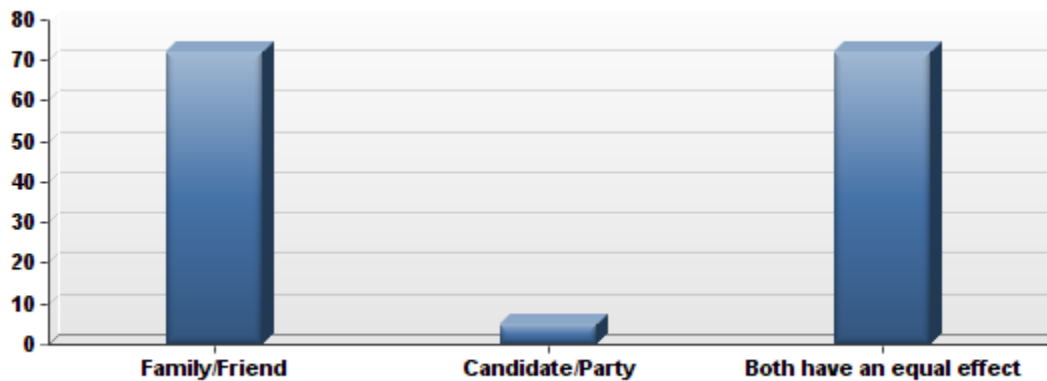
17. Are you more or less likely to encourage someone to vote if contacted by a candidate or party?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	More	<div></div>	17	12%
2	Less	<div></div>	16	11%
3	The Same	<div></div>	110	77%
	Total		143	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.65
Variance	0.47
Standard Deviation	0.68
Total Responses	143

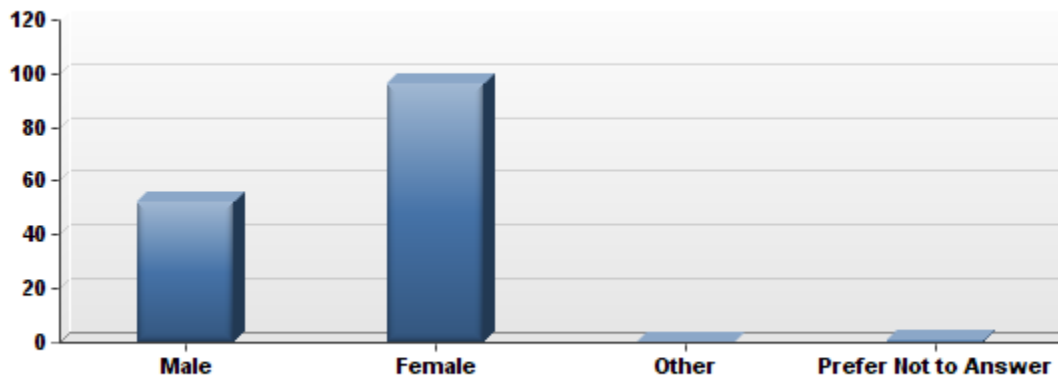
18. Are you more likely to vote if asked by a close family/friend or by a candidate/party?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Family/Friend	72	48%
2	Candidate/Party	5	3%
3	Both have an equal effect	72	48%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.00
Variance	0.97
Standard Deviation	0.99
Total Responses	149

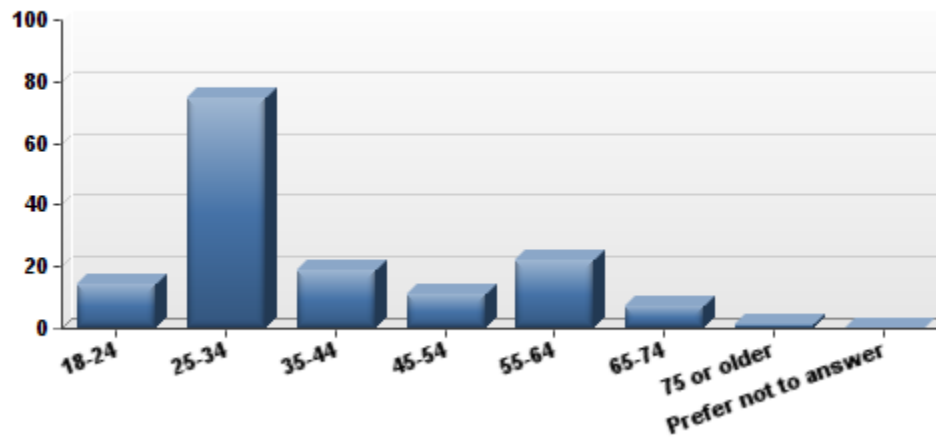
19. Gender: What is your gender?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Male	52	35%
2	Female	96	64%
3	Other	0	0%
4	Prefer Not to Answer	1	1%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	1.66
Variance	0.27
Standard Deviation	0.51
Total Responses	149

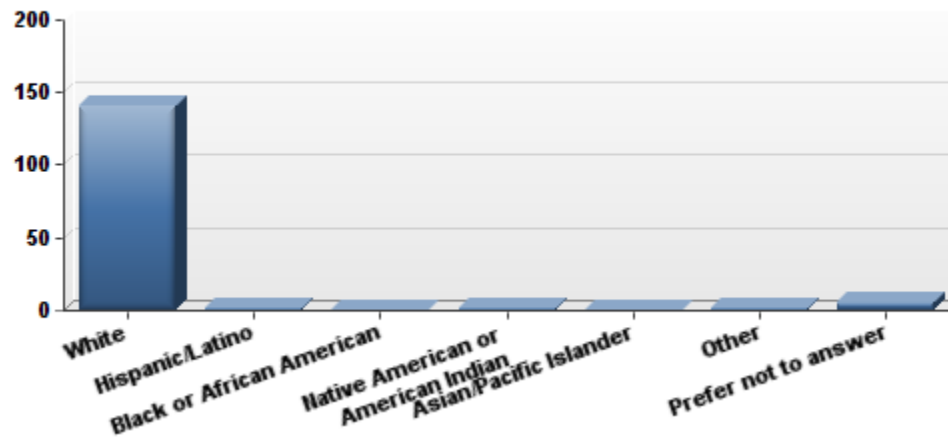
20. Age: What is your age?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	18-24	14	9%
2	25-34	75	50%
3	35-44	19	13%
4	45-54	11	7%
5	55-64	22	15%
6	65-74	7	5%
7	75 or older	1	1%
8	Prefer not to answer	0	0%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	2.85
Variance	2.06
Standard Deviation	1.44
Total Responses	149

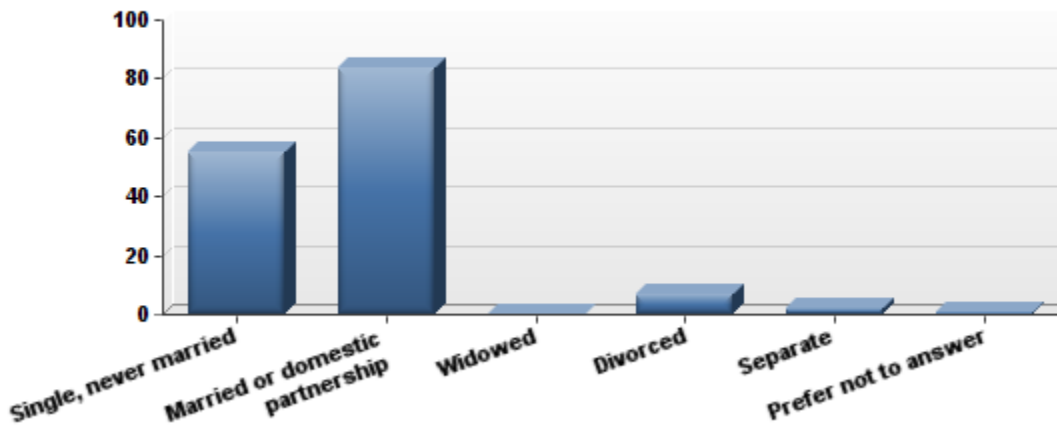
21. Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity



#	Answer	Response	%
1	White	140	94%
2	Hispanic/Latino	1	1%
3	Black or African American	0	0%
4	Native American or American Indian	2	1%
5	Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0%
6	Other	1	1%
7	Prefer not to answer	5	3%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Mean	1.28
Variance	1.43
Standard Deviation	1.20
Total Responses	149

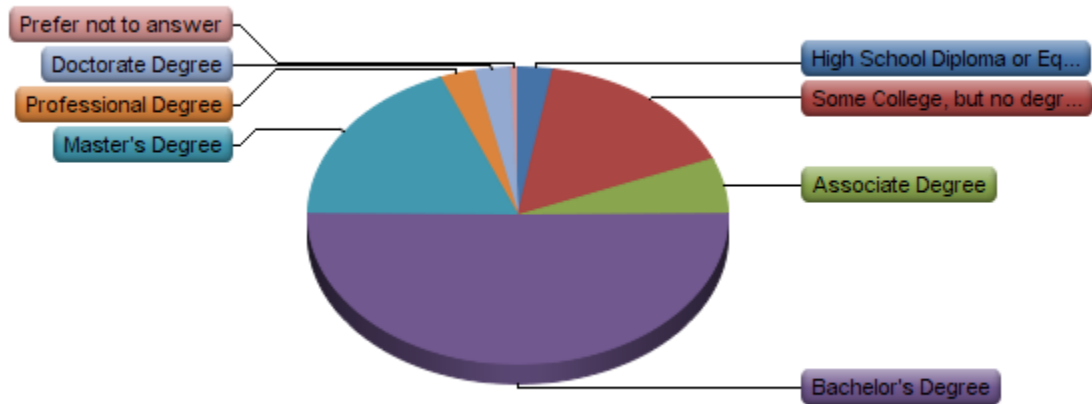
22. Marital Status: What is your marital status?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Single, never married		55	37%
2	Married or domestic partnership		84	56%
3	Widowed		0	0%
4	Divorced		7	5%
5	Separate		2	1%
6	Prefer not to answer		1	1%
	Total		149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Mean	1.79
Variance	0.75
Standard Deviation	0.86
Total Responses	149

23. Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	High School Diploma or Equivalent	4	3%
2	Some College, but no degree	24	16%
3	Associate Degree	9	6%
4	Bachelor's Degree	75	50%
5	Master's Degree	28	19%
6	Professional Degree	4	3%
7	Doctorate Degree	4	3%
8	Prefer not to answer	1	1%
	Total	149	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Mean	3.89
Variance	1.59
Standard Deviation	1.26
Total Responses	149

Appendix F Interview Questions

1. Briefly describe the roles you are/have been in that involved encouraging people to vote?
2. In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?
3. Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?
4. What types of messaging have you used to encourage people to vote?
 - a. How does this messaging differ from that messaging used to persuade individuals to support a specific candidate or issue?
 - b. What messaging do you use to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turnout on Election Day?
5. What other methods have you used to encourage people to vote? In other words, how do you mobilize voters?
 - a. How have your methods differed when encouraging turnout vs persuading voters to support a specific candidate or issue?
 - b. What methods have you used to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turn out on Election Day?
6. How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?
7. What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?
8. In what ways have you relied on influencers or “opinion leaders” (i.e. media, influential community members, etc) to help encourage individuals to vote?
9. To what extent would you say you have relied on “indirect mobilization” (i.e. people you’ve contacted, encouraging others to vote) in your voter mobilization efforts?
10. How have you established contacts in and built relationships with communities (social networks) you had no prior relationship with?
11. How have you leveraged online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc) to encourage individuals to vote?
12. If there was one piece of advice you could give to someone looking to encourage people to vote, what would it be?

Appendix G Interview Transcripts

Name: Carolyn Jackson

Positions: Former American and Civil Liberties Union Lobbyist, Current Attorney and Lobbyist for Flaherty and Hood

1. Briefly describe the roles you are/have been in that involved encouraging people to vote?

I was the lobbyist for the ACLU of Minnesota until December of 2012. I worked very hard to defeat the voter I.D campaign in Minnesota and in the process of doing that learned a lot about the legal nature of voting rights, to actually get out the vote and actually had a lot of in depth conversations about voting.

2. In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?

Oh gosh! I think it's a sense of citizenship and of duty. It's kind of like why do you go to the doctor for a check-up when you're well. It's the same sort of thing. It's part of my civic duty to vote and I think ultimately that's what drives people to the polls.

3. Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?

There are two main reasons why people don't vote. One, is they dislike the candidates and they would only vote for somebody that they liked. Or they believe that their vote does not count because there are millions of votes cast.

4. What types of messaging have you used to encourage people to vote?

Oh gosh, so I failed to say I also have done campaign work at the state legislative level as well as for the voter I.D. Messaging has to be simple, if you're explaining you're not gaining. That's a maxim I'm sure you've heard before.

Gosh, it's more about just reminding people that Election Day is coming up. That's the primary thing. As far as just getting them to the polls, the most important thing is to remind them this is the day to vote, 'cause a lot of people will get distracted and not think about it. So you have to try and make sure that the people you want to vote, go to vote and if you're living in the abstract, everybody go vote but its primarily the people you want to win to remind them to vote. That's the message like "Election day's November 6th!" Then what they do is they follow with question, "What's your plan to vote? What time will you vote? Do you have a plan of how you're going to get to the polls?" And that's something that they added in recent years which is kind of a nice device to make them think like "Oh I'm going to stop before I go to work" and then when they're on their way to work "Oh yeah, I've got to go vote." So the important thing is just to remind them to go out and vote.

a. How does this messaging differ from that messaging used to persuade individuals to support a specific candidate or issue?

It is different. What you start out with is you want to introduce people to the idea or the candidate and so that's a more generalized message and you have to get couple of different hits. I think they have to hear the message between three and seven times before they start to understand it and the same thing with name recognition. Which is why incumbents do so well. "Oh yeah I know him" or "I know her" and so a lot of it is just getting into people's attention. So that's the first part of the messaging and with an issue it's trying to get their attention. So that's when you have earned media and paid media isn't until later but earned media is really important so the people are aware like "Oh this issue is out there" and "Oh this is something I should care about" and then you can follow up with persuasive phone calls or with mail or stuff like that. But the important thing is first to get into the consciousness of people.

With the candidates it's different because you're working within a community where they already have friends and things like that so it's getting your friends and then meeting people and then going to events and things like that so that you can start putting a face with a name and identify the person. So that's a lot more about identifying and getting recognition of it and then identifying the voters that like that. They like the message or they like the candidate. And so the first thing is to introduce the concept or idea, the second one is to find your supporters and the third one is to get them to the polls.

b. What messaging do you use to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turnout on Election Day?

Well the most powerful thing you can do to get a voter is to get someone they know to encourage them to vote. And so that's where campus activists are important and there are a number of student organizations as you know that talk about the importance of voting and so the message to low turnout voters is your vote really does matter and here are specific ways in which your vote will matter and that's the best way to get them to turnout. So it's both the message and the messenger because if I were to go down and say "Your vote really matters" and they're like "who the heck are you and why do we care".

Now if someone famous and I said that might be different but a lot of celebrities don't want to get associated with voting because they don't want people to hate them. They want to be loved and they want fame. So if it's a friend or someone that they know and respect or have some other relationship says you should vote and this is why, that's the best message. But something that directly affects your life as well as someone who the messenger is someone that you would listen to.

5. What other methods have you used to encourage people to vote? In other words, how do you mobilize voters?

Well making it available is the important thing. It is intimidating. It is like taking a civics exam when you go to vote and so if you know how to get to your polling place and you have transportation to get there and a way to get there, especially with the low turnout voters so, with poor people, with students, people who are new to an area. If they have been reached out to and the secretary of state sends out a card to you once you've registered to vote telling you where your place is and I think they may even send it out twice but I know you get a card saying this is where your voting place is and if you get that and if you know of somebody else who can tell you this where you vote, this is how you get there or if you're elderly and someone will drive you there. So really the physical act of getting to the polls is really important.

If they have a plan that makes sure your voters can get to the polls and that's why something like voter I.D is so bad because once they get there and they can't vote, then "Oh I lost my driver's license" and "I moved and my driver's license isn't updated," things like that will turn away these voters and it's not a positive experience and they won't do it again. Or something like early voting is really good because then you can organize say "here, let's all go together and we'll go vote" and it's a lot easier to do that in a rolling fashion for a number of weeks then it is just on voting on election day because then you've got work schedules and things like that to work around.

a. How have your methods differed when encouraging turnout vs persuading voters to support a specific candidate or issue?

Sure, turnout is a very short conversation and it's really short. "How are you going to vote?" "How are you going to get to the polls?" "Do you need help getting to the polls" "Thank you very much for your time." Often times that's something you can do on the phone. It doesn't have to be visual it's "Don't forget to vote," "Do you know how you're going to get there?" and "Great, fantastic, thank you" and they feel the love.

Whereas with a persuasion I always think of it as like you have three levels, you have the ten word message, you have the thirty second message and you have the five minute message so you know if you have a slogan, just say no or something like that that's really simple and then you can kind of get the catch word if they see it in print and if they see it in an ad on TV, if they hear it in a call then that kind of hits, clicks, "Oh that's that message, I'm going to vote for them. I like IKE". Then the thirty second one is you have to be able to distill whatever it is you're selling, whether it's the candidate or the message into a thirty second ad and that's an elevator speech and say this is what the issue is this is why it's important and this is why we need your vote or this is who the candidate is, these are the three things she's running on and this is why we need your vote. Then you have the five-minute conversation for someone who you actually engage with. The door knocking and they're like "you know, who are you and why are you running for office" and then you have to have a more in depth conversation. You have your talking points, but then you have to be willing to go in depth and that's a very rare conversation but those are really important because those are the people who will give

you money, those are the people who will get other voters to go and those are the people who you know it's hard to reach out to sometimes, but sometimes those are the most powerful people you have. "I don't like this guy but he came to my door and then he explained this to me and this is great" or "I didn't like this issue until someone actually explained this to me and "Holy smokes this is really important." And so the converted voter is often a really good spokesperson because then they will tell people "Oh my mind was changed, I thought this was crummy" or "I thought this was great, now it's terrible" even more powerful actually and that's why negative campaigning works because now they have anger behind them.

But you have to have the message and then all three of them have to be the same but you have the slogan, the thirty-second elevator speech and then the five-minute in depth. And then you don't want to go half an hour and sometimes... "Oh I got a lot of doors to knock on" or "I got a lot of phone calls to make." But if you can do it in five minutes then that's really good but they all have to tie.

b. What methods have you used to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turn out on Election Day?

I think for the low turnout population it is really important for them to see what's in it for them because that's probably why they're not voting, they don't care, they don't see any benefit of it, the candidates aren't looking at me, this issue doesn't affect me and so if you can A, get a message that affects people and B, get a messenger who will tell them "You need to listen to this" and that's why traditionally, a lot of political organizing has been through churches. It's a really trusted messenger to have your minister stand up and say, "This is what our community is going to do, and we all need to go vote." It's really powerful because it's a trusted messenger and third is to make sure that there's a plan that makes it easier for them to vote. That's where it gets really expensive because you have to have somebody to make sure that they get to the polls and get out to vote which can be really expensive.

6. How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?

Well one thing is when you are a parent and you are a parent of a teenager and you can talk to the other parents about it "Is your child registered to vote?" and "They're going to turn 18, you know isn't that exciting that they're all registered to vote?" That's kind of the gossip and what's new and exciting and they're 18 and they go and vote.

Same thing when you're talking to your friends and they have college students "Oh I just talked to my daughter and made sure she had her absentee ballot" so that's one sort of the mom network that I would personally use. It just is, in my personal life it's also in just your social

network and it's like "oh the elections coming up and I can hardly wait for it to be over" and you know it's "Tuesday, it's next Tuesday, oh it's been going on for so long" that kind of conversation and that's a conversation that's really neutral and you talk to everybody about and not upset things. And then to wear your "I voted" sticker on election day and so that's kind of how I used my social networks to vote and that's just to kind of remind people that election day is coming up.

But the people that I circulate with are established voters for the most part, but it's the same thing in every aspect of your life, you just remind people when Election Day is coming up and the wonderful thing about it is it's completely neutral, you don't have to advocate for anything and you don't have to, you know get into a political discussion and in fact sometimes they're like "Ha-ha I'm going to vote to cancel your vote." Everybody talks about having fierce family fights over thanksgiving, but that's after the election and getting out the vote it's really your civic duty and that is what most people know voting as. So it's a real positive conversation and that's what social networks that I would think people talk about.

7. What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?

When you're in a situation where everybody around you is voting then there's social pressure to vote. It's like all the cool people vote and in conversation if you're talking to somebody and they get a sense that they're voting and you're not going to vote, you kind of want to be in the in crowd and talk about well "what was the turnout like" and "who was the election judge" and in places where there's social pressure, and as we talked earlier about close networks and what was the term? Strong and weak ties?

Strong and weak ties, that's a really good weak tie one because oh I want to be in the crowd and I want to be a part of this group and everybody in this group is voting, I should be voting too. So that's a really good weak ties relationship to talk about voting because it is completely neutral to civic duty, "We're all Americans, we all going to vote, it's a national thing and isn't that great, wave the flag".

8. In what ways have you relied on influencers or "opinion leaders" (i.e. media, influential community members, etc) to help encourage individuals to vote?

Well it depends, the problem is if it's people who are already engaged, they're reading the paper and it's really important to mobilize what I call a base and that's where more traditional media is really important that if they see Walter Mondale's in favor of something you know you're going to get the liberals if they see George W Bush in favor of something you're going to get the conservatives. Or George will...pick your spokesperson and so the traditional media is very, very, very important for getting your base to turn out, your base.

As far as low engagement voters, that's really hard because they're probably not reading the paper they're probably not watching the evening news so the thing is—how do you reach them? Are they on Facebook? Well that's a new thing that's available, you can put ads on Facebook. If people are looking at a certain type of page they're going to be where you want and a Facebook ad pops up and that's researching the name recognition or issue recognition and that's where your slogan or your ten word statement is really important. "Oh that's out there, that's out there," it's not a strong connection it's a very weak connection but after a while it gets into your awareness.

I don't know, with Twitter I've never used it for a Get out the Vote type of thing and I suppose if it's something funny and then people would follow it but that's more, for me, a gossip network. Like what are people saying, what's going on?

Facebook has been a new thing that people are using, but then again low engagement voters are not going on Facebook anymore so it's not cool. That's an old people thing. It's become establishment. So it's where are they gathering? What are they doing? If it's an event like the presidential candidate speaking at a college campus, well that's a really high interest thing and you'd go see the president whether or not you're going to vote because he's president and so that's where like big splashy events can reach out, but that's not social media, but then you can use social media to promote the event.

9. To what extent would you say you have relied on "indirect mobilization" (i.e. people you've contacted, encouraging others to vote) in your voter mobilization efforts?

Well that's where you can network with leaders of organizations. So one thing we did in the Voter I.D campaign is we talked to rotary groups. So rotary groups are people who are engaged in business and have networks and get them talking about issues. So we spoke to a number of different rotary groups and then gave them food for thought and then they can go out and talk to people and that's a lot of networking.

We tried to get as many leaders of organizations as we could to engage in the topic. The League of Women Voters contacted AARP and the AARP then went out and gave the message and AARP talked to Lutheran Social Services and Lutheran Social Services got a flier in Lutheran churches so that's where if you have a corporate, and corporate in the sense of being an organization, leader that you can get to talk to their members that's really effective.

As far as a more person-to-person thing, when we were talking about door knocking and if you can get somebody to change somebody's mind then they would be more likely to probably talk to somebody else about it, because it's news. "Oh, my mind changed, I didn't know this" and be willing to talk to their friends but that's a real high energy and probably, maybe they'll tell five people. But if you have a bad experience you're going to go out and tell your friends "Oh my gosh, I went to the grocery store and bought some spoiled meat, this is terrible, don't shop there" right? And so that type of network people will gossip about things that are interesting experiences. So if you can change their mind, a funny ad on TV or really, really outrageous ad.

That's why people do the outrageous ads to try and get your attention. But if you can get someone to have an interesting experience around your candidate or your topic then they'll go out and tell their friends because its gossip right?

10. How have you established contacts in and built relationships with communities (social networks) you had no prior relationship with?

Okay, there's a two-prong answer to that. One, is it takes a lot of organizational work and it's really boring gritty stuff of making lists of names and phone numbers and emails and then updating it and keeping a list and that's something that no one appreciates and it's a lot of work, but it's very important and in some centralized place you have a list of who you've contacted and who you know. I did a lot of cold calling and it helped that I was with the ACLU so people would recognize it. It wasn't just Joe blow calling out nowhere. "Hi this is Carolyn Jackson of ACLU and I'm reaching out to ask people about voter I.D and I would know something about them. I would do a little research beforehand. So I had the calling card of my organization or the status of my organization and then also some research on them. And I did a lot of cold calling and I called friends, I called enemies I called everybody. I had some reason for calling them and if you support this, this is the difference it will make was the pitch and I was extremely successful actually. So that's one way, it's just the cold call and it's hard to do because you have to be extremely well prepared and you have to keep really good record of the conversation so that then you can say "Oh I talked to Jered and he's doing this capstone project, and I thought it was about campaigning but it's really about getting out the vote," so take really careful notes so that when you tell other people and then you close by saying "This is great I'm so glad we had this conversation" do you know of anyone else I should talk to. Basic networking question right?

So there's the cold call and then there's the meeting with your friends so you say "I know that you and I know each other through church but I know that you're involved in the AAUW, can I come talk to the AAUW"... "Oh sure that's great" and then you meet people that way so you have your close network and you ask them what their network is. That doesn't have to be as focused or as strategic because then you're just saying "Oh we're like minded, can you connect me with other likeminded people?" A lot of networking happens that way and engagement so then you get a speaking thing or a chance to present the views to people who are already friendly, so it's a relationship base as opposed to a status base where I'm a lobbyist for ACLU and you're the lobbyist for MSUSA, let's talk about this even though we're strangers.

11. How have you leveraged online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to encourage individuals to vote?

One of the things that's very expensive to do and is underestimated is having an information-filled website because people often will be very shy about voting, but you can give them a site to go to, either a website or a Facebook page, where they can, in the privacy of their own home, explore the issue and make up their mind. A lot of people are really nervous about

having a public conversation about voting or politics but if you give them a site to go that's really important.

Move Minnesota for instance, which I've been working with this year, are like. "Oh go to our website for more information" and you go there and there isn't any. It's like, "but I want to know this" and then it's not there so if I want to go in depth or if I'm unsure of what I think, it's nice to have resources online to passively get people. So a place to send them so that they can passively learn. That's increasingly an important thing, because people are less and less likely to want to talk about politics because it's gotten so ugly.

12. If there was one piece of advice you could give to someone looking to encourage people to vote, what would it be?

Oh gosh. How does it affect the person you're talking to? A lot of liberal groups especially preach at people, "Oh you should do this, you ought to do this, this is for a good cause." Instead of saying, "This will help you because of x" and so I have a friend who really talks about people's motivations, what are their incentives what is the person's incentive to vote? If you vote, this good thing will happen to you and that's really important to think about, the person you are trying to get to vote, what's in it for them? Now it's in it for you to get them to vote and most of us are self-centered and we want to say "Oh I really think this is important so you should go vote," no. You would want to know this because it will affect your property taxes. You will want to know this because it will affect your job prospects and so one of the things we say to students is if students go out and vote in great numbers, how would anybody want to put these public tuitions on them? It's like if they knew students were going to rise up and vote on a regular basis they would never do that, but they know students don't vote so they do whatever they want. You would become the number one issue because it's an incredible voting bloc, but students don't think that way.

So it's what's in it for the person who you want to vote? You have to give them an incentive to do that.

Name: Graeme Allen

Positions: Community and Political Organizer for the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation.

1. Briefly describe the roles you are/have been in that involved encouraging people to vote.

With GOTV I've been a volunteer coordinator for a congressional campaign, I have been a field organizer for a school levy campaign, I've been a political and community organizer with Union GOTV work and I've been a field organizer on an issue based referendum campaign.

2. In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?

I think there are many factors why people vote. I think if you look at the data, they'll say, "What kind of contact has someone had either with a candidate, either direct conversation or someone that they know is encouraging you to vote." Also, if someone connects with a particular issue or candidate it moves them enough to decide to vote. So I think there's a lot of different reasons why people vote. Some people vote out of positive, looking for positive change, some people vote because they don't like someone and they want another person to run. There are many different reasons why people are motivated.

3. Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?

I think people choose not to vote—the vast majority of people that, if I had to guess why they do not vote, it's because they are not connected with the issues or the candidates, if it's a candidate based election. So I'd say their number one issue is that they're not paying attention and don't know. Until if it's one of those even years or presidential years, people might hear about it but they don't get connected with what is actually going on—the candidates that are running. And ultimately, out of indifference or out of a sense of lack of knowledge about either the issue or the candidates they just ultimately decide, "It's not worth my time." I think that's fundamentally why most people don't vote. Number two is there is a segment of the population that say, "My vote doesn't matter."

4. What types of messaging have you used to encourage people to vote?

I think kind of a gambit. There was a school levy, it was kind of talking about the future and, obviously, the nuts and bolts of how much it would cost a household extra. So trying to connect on issues, "These are the points, this is why you should be involved, this is why should do that."

One of the most effective campaigns I've been a part of was the Minnesotans United for All Families. It was an organization trying to defeat the constitutional amendment to ban marriage for same sex couples in Minnesota. I think it was the most effective campaign I had been a part of in terms of messaging. Because it really relied on trying to connect to people emotionally and have them think and change their ideals based on their own set of principles and morals. Even if initially they didn't agree with the stance, but I think the most effective strategies in terms of messaging I've seen are folks that can connect an emotional or personal story with

why they're encouraging you to vote for either a candidate or on behalf of an issue, by far that has the best effect.

If you're having a conversation with someone about why they should vote for X, Y and Z, the most effective thing is to personalize it and tell why it's important to you. People just generally receive that better and are able to kind of potentially relate it to themselves. Or at least put policy or individuals in human terms that makes more sense as opposed to, "Vote for me because I want to spend this percentage more or this percentage less on something." The emotional, real world effects have had a lot more impact.

a. How does this messaging differ from that messaging used to persuade individuals to support a specific candidate or issue?

I think definitely when you're trying to get someone to actually take a specific action, voting one way or the other. I think the best way is to try to talk about why your issue or candidate is better, for you, better for the community, better potentially for their lives, or at least the better option in general. And possibly, depending on the issue, what the consequences would be to vote if they vote "in the wrong way."

I think general kind of Get Out the Vote efforts are seen as less threatening to people, they're slightly more or less skeptical if you just encourage people to generally go out and vote and don't necessarily tell them which way to vote or not. Sometimes they're more receptive than if it's seen as maybe a potentially more biased kind of effort.

b. What messaging do you use to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turnout on Election Day?

I think the vast majority of people are interested in how an issue or a candidate's policies would affect them personally. And oftentimes candidates try to have multiple messages, especially on larger scales, so you can think presidential, congressional, try to have many different messages for audiences that they're trying to motivate. The issues that affect Joe White homeowner are different than those of underserved populations potentially, as well as young people. The more it's targeted towards them the more likely that they're going to resonate with what you're saying.

Because it affects them they may be more likely to act, by that I mean vote, for the candidate. For example, if you're running for US congress or president and you have one of your major talking points talking about the high cost of higher education and offering solutions to address those issues, you're far more likely to engage young people and voting. It's not the only thing that motivates young people, the kind of basics of jobs, economic security, potential for a better life,

but there are a lot of macro issues, environmental issues. People do run the gambit of what issues they're interested in, but they're far more likely to be engage and interested if you're speaking to an issue that they feel directs them exclusively.

So higher education for young people, that kind of 18 to 25 year old crowd, underserved populations that keep on talking about policing, community development, job opportunity, recognized past histories, that speaks to a lot of underserved and minority groups. Seniors, you can talk to about social security, healthcare, Medicaid, those kind of things that directly affect their lives are important. But it doesn't exclude that folks who won't necessarily care about environmental issues, trade issues, foreign policy. It doesn't exclude that, but you're far more likely to get a response if a candidate's or an issue-based campaign is addressing issues that affect the broad populace that is going to vote.

5. My next question is, outside of just messaging, what are some of the methods you use to encourage people to vote?

I think it's gotten very sophisticated in just the last 10-plus years. I think that there are a number of different tools like social media and the internet have made different things possible. Of course with almost every campaign, especially large ones, where you're talking to thousands upon thousands of potential voters during the Get Out the Vote effort, you do the basics, you do phone calls, you knock on doors, and you leaflet at the very end in targeted areas.

But I think social media, in terms of finding volunteers and other folks that are willing to spread your message though social media, has a big impact. Especially for the 45 and under crowd. They're far more likely, potentially, to receive that message because they don't have phones or don't have a place that is door knocked on average, especially for young folks. In union work, we mail a lot of post cards, it's pretty old school but we know that, based on returns, it has a percentage of effect that is beneficial to remind people who the most union friendly candidate is.

I know campaigns that have sent out videos to remind people to vote, kind of online, YouTube hosted videos that are targeted with ads so that folks that surf the web can get a lot of their information on issues.

There's online advertising, flyers, in kind of traditional races or the brochures, the things that are left on doors, those happen a lot depends on the population. If you're trying to get seniors you can often—a lot of folks will go to kind of senior facilities within the last month of an election to try to talk to people and encourage them to vote as they're more likely to vote early. For college students, being on campus visible with students and volunteers willing to engage

people face-to-face, drag them to the polls or at least remind them that the next several days things are going to happen and they expect them to vote. Those are huge.

Getting volunteers to drive people to work, we've seen that. It is obviously a small number that you can cart from place to place, but it does have an effect. Dragging people to the polls, being visible in very public areas with information reminding people to vote. I've seen people on overpasses and bridges have large signs, asking people to vote or holding up signs in neighborhoods reminding people to vote. You have lawn signs, while lawn signs never vote, but the perception is that they help turnout. There are a lot of different means,

I would say that as social media kind of turns into micro-targeting folks. And more campaigns and larger campaigns are willing to invest in it, you're going to see a lot more ad sponsors, with video, with potentially messaging that resonates with you, based on private data that companies now have. I think we're going to move more into that area.

a. How have your methods differed when encouraging turnout vs persuading voters to support a specific candidate or issue?

I think with any kind of field campaign, GOTV planning, it's really about getting your base. People that you either have already identified or believe that if turned on to voting will vote in your favor. I think plans are usually drawn up within the last several months identifying known supporters. Those folks will get many phone calls in the last several days just as reminders about where the polling location is, how late the polls are open. There will be offers to—if they need a ride or have any other concerns or considerations, making sure they have the documentation, or have at least registered to go and vote.

So if you've been able to identify someone over the course of, let's say, six months, on the last several days they will be heavily targeted to make sure that they're planning, they know about the vote and the campaign is willing to assist in any way to help facilitate that. And those can be very targeted. Those are through database systems that track all information in regards to conversations that you had, how folks have responded to your potential questions based on either issues or preference by an individual.

Those folks are heavily targeted. There is a kind of a mass, let's say it's a big congressional race or larger and your side feels that the youth vote will be beneficial. Then the plan typically is within the last week you do a lot of visibility, try to engage students that might have not been involved and try to flood them as much as possible within the final week. To be engaged with different strategies as opposed to a phone call. As most young people have cell phones that aren't on public record, especially if you've never voted before, campaigns don't have your potential information to be able to call or mail you something, you're going to have to find them face-to-face. So strategies where a youth turn

out is beneficial to your side it's as much face-to-face time as you can get, offering events, offering ways for students to get involved or at least be interested in finding out information. Tabling, hosting parties, events, gatherings. Those kinds of things.

Like I said, if you're targeting for people to vote for a specific way then you want to encourage your supporters to vote when you think it's most advantageous for them to vote. You want to make sure that for seniors which are far more likely to vote earlier and regularly, to target them earlier. With messaging, encouraging them to vote today. Those kinds of things.

Voter registration would have taken place, if it's a large campaign, months before. Trying to identify people that are likely or self-identified that they are likely to support your candidate or issue. And you'll have hopefully registered them to vote if they hadn't already or reregister them if they've moved. And we'll continue to try to get them to vote as soon as they legally can. A more general campaign where you're just trying to get voter participation to increase, I'd say that the only kind of different strategy is that you probably don't micro-target the populations. It's more of a broad, "Every person matters," as opposed to, "Just the people I want to vote."

So if your efforts are for, let's say, citywide or anything like that there's a lot of potentially, depending on your resources, ability to go door-to-door. Which no candidate campaign would do because of access to a database. They would skip unlikely supporters of theirs. But in general kind of Get Out the Vote there's a kind of the publicity in terms either of events or social media. Those kinds of things. If you have the resources and time, door knocking campaigns, door-to-door kind of indiscriminate targeting, it's different.

I think one big difference in strategy when you're not trying to get people to vote specific things, but just to turn out the vote, you try to get the biggest bang for your buck. And that mostly involves large events happening where you can have an easy, visible presence. Let's say for a parade you might have a little army of volunteers to be able to pass out information or some kind of large, social, outdoor gathering or festival. You want to target folks that way. If there was opportunities to get in high density residential areas, you might target those folks.

Basically the main difference is when you're trying to advocate or you have a specific vote that you want folks to take, you have done your research by the time of GOTV. You're talking to people that you have identified that are likely supporters of yours. And that based on their demographic they are very likely to vote for you in higher percentages than not. With non-specific, but just GOTV all

populace increase types of voting, then you try to do more bang for your buck as opposed to any kind of micro-targeting.

b. What methods have you used to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turn out on Election Day?

I think you know, honestly like that is—every election cycle that is the nut that most people try to crack. And after every election people kind of dissect, “What could we do more, what could we do X.” I think at the end of the day that the most important thing is when trying to turn out traditionally underrepresented populations is realizing that, kind of what I started off with. The things that are most impactful on whether or not someone will vote are; if they’ve had direct communication with the candidate. Which on the congressional level and presidential level is almost nonexistent. But if friends or family ask you to vote for X candidate then you’re far more likely to vote.

This predicates, for underserved or for anyone, having direct conversations with people about issues that affect them. That is the most likely to motivate people to vote for your candidate. If he’s got someone that can talk about issues that matter to them either personally or on a macro level that are important to them. So what the strategies entails is, I think what you’ve seen, is a lot of it—one of the massive criticisms I have about, let’s say, a presidential campaign is the millions upon millions upon millions, tens of millions of dollars that either campaigns spend on TV advertising or radio advertising, mostly TV.

Those tens of millions of dollars would be far more effective hiring people to go face-to-face with the populations that are underserved that you want to engage with. To engage on the message that resonates within if it’s a candidate or generally. That’s the most important thing, that is where there is—like I said the kind of trends are that there’s going to be micro-targeting on social and those kinds are going to get more and more precise. But at the end of the day, for folks that are not turned on by that, more money should be put into organizing and less on TV 30 second ads, because the bang for the buck really exists in having face-to-face conversations. Even if those conversations are paid for or purchased conversations.

6. How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?

Two good examples, I think, especially on kind of the informal social networks.

During the Minnesotans United for all Families campaign, we heavily recruited volunteers. We were in a program that was mildly successful, a program just based on having conversations with friends and family. Because of the highly emotional nature of the topics for many

individuals and perception on how their family would react to those issues, we had specific training on how people could not only physically, mechanically have conversations, respond to concerns, questions. Those kinds of things. But also would help map out for their network of folks that were potentially unlikely to support “our side.”

We would intentionally have individuals map out how to have conversations and with whom in their network of friends and family would be most beneficial to have those conversations with, conduct follow-up and make personal appeals. That’s the only campaign I’ve ever been a part of where there was a significant amount of resources put into engaging your personal social network. I think it would be good for a lot of larger campaigns to talk to your friends and family about X, but I think resources and things like that generally aren’t employed.

One of the tools for the Minnesotans United campaign was being able to use voter databases to map with Facebook and I think one other kind of social media link at the time. Actually link how likely your social network would vote on a potential issue. These databases are pretty much the life blood for the political parties as they are able to identify potential probabilities for an individual to vote for any particular candidate or on a particular issue.

But in the labor world where I work now as a community organizer, during election cycles we are heavily involved. We make sure we use our databases to make phone calls and send out postcards. But also, our union leadership is very methodical about making sure that every union member knows which candidates are labor endorsed and labor supported. And so there is a high percentage of union members, as opposed to the general population that vote because they’re regularly targeted and told specifically who to vote for in their region.

And more resources are obviously given to races that have been analyzed to potentially be closer elections.

7. What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?

Definitely friends and family. The more trusted a family or friend is, the more influence they’ll potentially have on you voting. Especially if it’s important to this friend or family member that you vote. And like I said, if a candidate talks to you or asks you to vote, you’re far more likely. But friends and family have a huge influence on you, they increase the likelihood for most people to vote.

Friends and family is the strongest network. In my world and in organized labor that the union network of organized labor is incredibly strong in terms of getting individuals to vote for their interests and perceived interests. I’d say those are pretty good community and depending on their nature, religious-based organizations, there can be informal networks established with that that can help reinforce particular voting of one way. Although it’s not as potentially strong. I think if you’re somehow linked to a particular issue or campaign that you’re having to

vote, let's say if you're a parent, a parent with school kids or grandparent with school kids in XYZ school district.

You're far more likely if someone from the PTA or the local school volunteer group asks you to vote a certain way on levies or to give approval for any types of funding or policy to the school board. But those networks can be very strong. I think informally, depending on your work relationship, I think that varies greatly. Your work colleagues, that's almost location-to-location. Based on the culture, obviously, some businesses and some companies really frown upon political advocacy, that kind of work. Some are far more willing to do voter registration or those kinds of efforts, but not so much allow for direct advocacy.

I'm trying to think of other social networks. Obviously like classmates and things like that and friends is another potential network. Alumni groups, we're really kind of getting into the bottom of the dregs here. There are obviously community-based organizations that, depending on where you live, can have strong influence. I think of like Minneapolis and St. Paul with very strong neighborhood associations that can have an influence for municipal elections. Obviously your local party has a huge influence for some folks that are politically regular voters and regularly likely to vote every cycle or every year.

Political party networks can make a huge difference in deciding who you vote for, who you might even choose as a candidate to for in a primary. Or those kind of things based on potential endorsement. There are many kind of social groups like environmental organizations that will make recommendations, AARP for seniors, education groups. There's lots of different kind of issue focused organizations that if you are already active you can almost consider them friends or family. Or something that you respect and are interested in their thoughts and opinions can have potentially strong factors in who you vote for and if you vote.

There's a lot of different types of organizations that exist if you're already engaged with those organizations, then yeah, you're more likely to listen to what they say.

8. In what ways have you relied on influencers or "opinion leaders" (i.e. media, influential community members, etc.) to help encourage individuals to vote?

If we go to the straight campaigns to just increase voter turnout. Nonpartisan, "non-biased" efforts, I think it's anyone that is willing to spread your message, I think those are the folks to rely on. With college students I think we've tried to work with the schools themselves to be able to help facilitate the registering of college students. We've worked with cities to help streamline the process and get information out to potential residences about voting procedures to kind of increase what their communication is on those proper procedures and timing and logistics.

On some campaigns I've worked with clergy in the faith community to get the word out about the vote, encouraging people to vote. I think there are several different types of organizations at least in the Twin Cities and Metro area that do have a large capacity to help facilitate Get Out

the Vote works. There's kind of strictly advocacy organizations like Take Action Minnesota. There's many kinds of like civically engaged groups like League of Women Voters that often try to engage folks through forums on topics or hosting candidate debates and those kinds of opportunities that allow for people to get aware of things.

Social media is not so much an entity, but encouraging people to do that. Far more of my experience has been what I would consider a particular issue or candidate mobilization as opposed to efforts that just try to increase turnout in general.

Compared to some of the other methods, how effective would you say leveraging these influences is?

I think that the general kind of education efforts to just increase voter turnout, without any particular candidate or issue advocacy is very tough. They're usually not as financed as well in terms of resources so they can't be micro-targeted. They're just kind of, "What is the biggest bang for our buck in terms of getting in front of people and asking them to go out and vote or facilitating registration." If we're talking about a full campaign as opposed to just straight GOTV. I think entities, neighborhood associations, any other kind of social group that you might be affiliated with or non-profit or advocacy organization has far more impact and far more resources if they were supporting a particular issue.

There just aren't many groups out there that strictly focus on increasing voter turnout without having an agenda. So it's hard to say that different methods worked better or less because it's so one-sided that it's hard for me to kind of break it down and say that these strategies worked better than others. Because the amount of resources, micro-targeting that are involved in issue based or candidate advocacy are so much more typically advanced that it's really kind of hard to compare.

9. To what extent would you say you have relied on "indirect mobilization" (i.e. people you've contacted, encouraging others to vote) in your voter mobilization efforts?

Voter mobilization is really—obviously the main focus is direct conversations, direct contact of some way with that individual. Most of the time there is intended interest and suggestion to—for the person you're trying to contact to also go out there and contact. But really, most GOTV efforts are aimed at specific individual mobilization or a potential family based on their issue group. Let's say if we're reaching out to someone because they're a union member, then we're going to encourage their whole family to go and support the union endorsed candidate. As pro-union candidates or the union lifestyle, if you will, our membership has impact on a family as opposed to just maybe one individual.

The circle, generally, for most of the campaigns I've been on are folks in your household. If you know of someone else in your network, friend or other family member that is potentially in the geography that can vote for your candidate or issue, encourage them. But really it's about knowing you have potentially thousands of people that you've already identified are likely

supporters of where you are. And just basically checking off that you're contacting them in the final several days to make sure that they specifically are mobilized. The reason for that is because in partisan, where a particular issue/advocacy campaigns and GOTV, again, you only want to target people that you know are very likely to vote for you or vote the way that you would like them to vote.

So it's pretty individualistic, though phone, through mailing. Union is slightly expanded to household and household members of union members. Again, for college students, if it's likely that they will vote for your issue in greater numbers than won't then get as many of them to go do it as is possible.

10. How have you established contacts in and built relationships with communities (social networks) you had no prior relationship with?

That's a tough one. I think generally the strategies that I have seen be most effective are finding already established members of those communities to be allies to what you're trying to advocate. For example, if you wanted to reach some underserved populations, maybe underrepresented ethnic minorities in terms of Candidate X. What you would do is you would identify several within that community that are potential supporters and work very closely with those kind of key people to help be the face of the advocacy efforts. Some campaigns try and, I think generally unsuccessfully, to swoop in the final couple of months in the campaign and try to organize based on particular backgrounds or ethnicity. Those kinds of things.

It rarely works unless there is an established member of those communities that are willing to work in tandem with a campaign or with a candidate to work on those efforts together. Trying to introduce yourself to a population where you or others don't have strong ties generally does not work. If it's college students, then you want college students that are willing to be the face and the driver of efforts. If it's seniors, then you want seniors to be the face and driving effort with outreach if that's your specific target.

I think that's generally what I've seen that works best. It takes many, many months to potentially get to a place where you can develop a full program that can culminate in active and targeted Get Out the Vote efforts if you're trying to organize based on specific backgrounds. That is the most effective way to do that.

11. How have you leveraged online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to encourage individuals to vote?

I think that's a good one. I think the best way, kind of coming from the premise that close friends and family that are respected by an individual, I think, have the greatest impact. So being advocate—if I'm Person X and I want people in my social network to vote certain ways, be public about it. Tell them why I'm voting, tell them that they should vote and why it's important to them. I think that can have potential impact especially on folks that hadn't made up their mind for an election. I think that many people identify with many different groups and

that can change over the course of their lives. They have volunteer associations through social media and networks.

The more groups that you're a part of or have been a part of in the past will tell you to vote for X the more likely that you're going to listen to that, feel comfortable with that recommendation if you haven't already made up your mind and go with a trusted friend. I'll tell you from a personal example, when I have to vote for judges, who I know very little about and generally, thankfully have no interaction with, I rely on trusted friends that work in the legal system. So I think for folks that don't know much about their municipal elections or anything like that, if there is a trusted organization or individual that actively says, repeatedly for a while, that, "I support X with Y candidate," that can have some significant influence.

And like I said, that can come from many different means. Friends and family potentially have more influence, but what organizations or entities that you personally associate with. Non-profits, other types of community associations or groups. If they tell you to vote a certain way, you're far more likely to do it. And I think the advantages of things like Facebook and Twitter and all those other kinds of networks is the relatively cheap ability to, especially during GOTV, to get messages out quickly, information out quickly and really kind of blast people on all sorts of waves.

12. If there was one piece of advice you could give to someone looking to encourage people to vote, what would it be?

This is my advice. If you're willing to volunteer to encourage someone else to vote you need to be able to articulate why it's important to your life. You're obviously doing it for some reason, it might be personal or familiar or for whatever reason. Be able to communicate why the issue or candidate is important to you.

Name: Jason Fossum

Positions: Director of Government Relations, Minnesota State College Student Association.

1. Briefly describe the roles you are/have been in that involved encouraging people to vote.

I've done get out the vote work both with MSCSA, (Minnesota State College Student Association) but also with several political campaigns and party units as well. That's kind of been my general experience.

2. In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?

I've always believed that voting patterns are typically driven by either an issue or by a candidate. I still kind of feel that way today. I still kind of feel like there's one or two things that drives somebody to the polls. A lot of times I think it comes down to a candidate or a party I guess more specifically or just an issue in general.

3. Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?

Probably, I think, the most common thing I hear from people who don't vote is that it doesn't matter. The more time you spend trying to convince them that it matters, the less they seem to believe you. At least that's my experience. So if somebody tells me they're not going to vote because it does matter, I typically don't spend too much time trying to convince them that it's going to matter.

4. What types of messaging have you used to encourage people to vote?

Messaging, as far as just for voting? I think it's always been issue-focused, it's always been candidate focused. The issue focused stuff is kind of the general. You care about this and so does this person. For me everything's always, other than the MSCSA work, about a candidate. With MSCSA it's just focused on you should vote because you can impact this issue or these three issues or whatever hired issue is the advertising for the day.

a. How does this messaging differ from that messaging used to persuade individuals to support a specific candidate or issue?

I think it's just with the candidate you're always connecting everything back to why that candidate is the right person. So it's connecting the issues that the people care about to that candidate. I think when you're just trying to get people to vote it's really just finding out what drives them and getting them to the polls. So depending on a candidate, I mean if I was working a campaign it really depended on what type of district we were in, what type of candidate did we have, what kind of race was it, how much money we had. That's the kind of stuff that would drive the message we would use to get people to the poll.

Sometimes if we had a candidate who probably was an underdog we would find other popular candidates to tie them to. If you like this person you're going to like this person.

That type of thing. So it really just comes down to finding what motivates people and that typically was issues or it was a party or a candidate or a principle I guess, for lack of a better word.

b. What messaging do you use to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turnout on Election Day?

I think in my experience the answer is yes, you do have to be a little bit different but most of that would be in the student area. You're trying to, with MSCSA we have to be very careful what we say, right? Party units and candidates can be far more expansive in their messaging if you will. So yeah, I mean the difference is I think we're driven by what we're allowed to say and what we aren't allowed to say, frankly.

5. What other methods have you used to encourage people to vote? In other words, how do you mobilize voters?

Well a lot of it is was all the bad things that will happen if you don't vote for our person. I mean that's really what it was. Except that's a messaging thing, I know but all of campaign is about messaging really in my opinion. You're not going to win no matter how good your candidate is if you don't know what people want to hear or what's important to them, right? So all of it kind of goes back to what you're selling and I don't really have a good answer to that to be honest.

There isn't any particular things you do? I know when I talked to Graeme he had a lot of the nuts and bolts and things that he did so I was wondering if you did anything in particular.

Are you talking like phone banking?

Yeah, just kind of methods you use to get people to vote?

Sure, in most cases Get Out the Vote efforts are focused on the phone banks, the door to door, some mail pieces encouraging people to vote. Both political parties have party sample ballots that they send to their bases so they can take the card with them right to the poll. I don't know if you've ever seen one of those, but it's essentially just a sample ballot and it shows you who to check the circle for.

From a party perspective or from a candidate perspective, those are all different things, but then the majority of the stuff that I see is door-to-door, targeted you know get these people who we know are going to vote, out? Versus the people who we don't want to waste our time with and people who aren't going to vote. On the other side, it's a lot of tabling, it's a lot of going right to the people where they are and telling them why this is important. We're connecting with them as to why it might be important to them.

a. How have your methods differed when encouraging turnout vs persuading voters to support a specific candidate or issue?

The difference on the GOTV side in the work that I've done has just been about "Here's information, this is how you do it, this is who you'll see on the ballot, here's how you can find some information on those folks", but even that has been limited. It's mostly "Here's who you might see on the ballot, we encourage you to look into it and how they stand on higher education issues and issues that are important to you and higher education" .

So again it's kind of limited as to what you can say but from the other side it's basically whatever you have to do to get that person out to the polls. I mean that's really what it comes down to. I know there are party units that provide rides to the polls or campaigns that do that. That's not something I've ever experienced; I've never coordinated rides to the polls but I do know that they're out there and that they're used effectively by different groups.

6. How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?

Well I would say it's so weird. That's an interesting question for me, because I've traditionally worked places where everybody votes so I didn't really have to do it. I mean if you look at my family, they all vote and at MSCSA everybody votes. I would say to answer that question, the most that we've done is through MSCSA trying to boost the student turnout and whether we've ever been successful and actually changing the number I don't know, we've registered 5, 10 thousand voters so I guess I really don't know how to answer that question. Everybody I work with already votes and everybody I'm around already does that.

7. What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?

Well, I think it's personal relationships. I can think of one election where I was at Stafford where I knew twenty people in the district and calling them personally certainly may have made them vote more than say just an ad on TV. So to me if you know the person, the personal relationship probably is the most effective one.

They only probably voted for the candidate because I asked them to right, not any other reason other than I said this was a good person and that was what drove them. I would say it's that probably.

8. In what ways have you relied on influencers or "opinion leaders" (i.e. media, influential community members, etc.) to help encourage individuals to vote?

In my experience a lot of that is through media tools and using those community leaders. I can remember several times in elections that I've worked on where we had a popular retired elected official like a mayor or somebody like that to endorse the calls or letters or whatever it might be. The one I can think of for sure was in Rochester where we had a former councilmember who was very popular, one with huge percentages in the vote and once we got

his endorsement he was on everything and I think ended up making the difference in the election. It's just because he pushed a lot of people, he pulled in a lot of Democrats and we were able to get his endorsement over the Independent and the Democrat and that's the biggest one in using those kind of key leaders.

I can say that using the media is difficult because you've got to give them something in order for them to pay attention so usually it was, okay, an endorsement or a letter from somebody that was important. The biggest one that I've ever used has been those community leaders that really have an impact on people.

Did you use any kind of influencers when you tried to like MSCSA's GOTV work?

We did use college presidents and the chancellor, but college presidents mostly. We did use them in emails and in some local advertising and stuff like that, so college presidents would be the biggest one I can think of.

9. To what extent would you say you have relied on "indirect mobilization" (i.e. people you've contacted, encouraging others to vote) in your voter mobilization efforts?

That makes me think of the party aspect of things. If we're calling the hardcore party folks and then we're depending on them to spread the word to their networks. I think the whole basis for Get out the Vote efforts is just to keep relying on your network and so I would say starting with the party base, is the one you count on to do that. That would be the example I can think of.

Let's see... what am I missing here? From an MSCSA perspective you know we, our whole structure is with our student leaders that we work with and then getting them to take it to the campuses. So we do all the training, we get them all the tools, we get them excited to vote, then get them to do the actual work on the campus. So that's our whole, get out the vote effort.

10. How have you established contacts in and built relationships with communities (social networks) you had no prior relationship with?

That's a great question. With MSCSA, I think it has been about kind of relying on our students to connect with those folks. We've given them tools like targeted advertising materials and things that appeal to the people in that area. But I just feel we don't have anything

11. How have you leveraged online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to encourage individuals to vote?

You know it's interesting because when I was working campaign in the early 2000's they were kind of new or not even existent at the time, but with MSCSA its constant and that's what we do. All of our communication is through Facebook, with our student leaders and to our followers and it's all through that. I think it basically just meshes repetition, it's "here's what you should be doing, here's when you should do it, here's why you should do it", so it's just been our entire focus for the past two Get Out the Vote efforts, that and taking it right to them

when they're sitting on the table eating lunch. So that's been the big shift. But from a campaign perspective, when I was campaigning there really wasn't social media.

12. If there was one piece of advice you could give to someone looking to encourage people to vote, what would it be?

I guess the piece of advice I would have is people don't want to know why it's important to you, they want to know why it's important to them and you've got to figure out what drives them because they're not going to move unless they get some reason to care. Whether you're working with a candidate or an organization, you've got to try to connect it to them in some way shape or form; otherwise it's not going to matter.

Name: Neil Aasve

Positions: Director of Campus Organizing, Minnesota State University Student Association;
Former Neighborhoods Organizing for Change Organizer

1. Briefly describe the roles you are/have been in that involved encouraging people to vote.

I have been involved with getting people to vote several ways. The first campaign I was involved in was with the DFL for the Obama campaign in 2008. I did Get Out the Vote work for a community organization in Minneapolis, Neighborhoods Organizing for Change. That was non-partisan outreach doing phone banking and door knocking. Also most currently working with MSUSA and getting college students at state universities out to vote.

2. In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?

I think people ultimately vote if they can identify a personal stake or personal interest in what issues are going to be important or that the candidates stand for. So I think they can connect a personal interest to something that the candidate is campaigning on and wanting people to support it. I think that's the big thing, I think it is that connection between their own personal life and the candidate.

3. Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?

I think, it's they just don't see how it affects them, their vote doesn't matter, they maybe aren't informed and don't have an interest in getting informed; who to vote for. I think also there may be people who do want to vote, but face barriers. Simple barriers. Not being a convenient location for them, not being able to get there, not having all the correct information and where, what they need to vote, maybe not knowing that they can take work off to vote, those types of things. I think more people don't vote because of this.

4. What types of messaging have you used to encourage people to vote?

Well I think my first campaign, which was the only one that was a partisan campaign, where I was getting actual people to vote for a particular candidate, all the messaging was given by the DFL.

I think with non-partisan voting outreach, the main thing is just asking are you registered to vote, do you know where to vote? Yes or no questions. What I thought was very helpful when talking to people about voting is asking questions that you know will result in a yes answer. I guess this is more a follow up to people you know that might be registered, list of people you know that are already registered to vote. I think I remember doing some phone banking where you'd say are you registered? Even though you already know they are registered and they say yes and you can tell them where their polling station is and say do you know where that is and they say yes. I think the idea behind that was when they started saying yes; it made them more likely to go out to vote if there's more of a positive reaction. I think more generally, that's

probably a specific situation but I think it's just asking questions "Do you know where to go vote?" "Are you registered to go vote?"

a. How does this messaging differ from that messaging used to persuade individuals to support a specific candidate or issue?

I mean most of the Get Out the Vote work I do is the type not focused on convincing people of a particular candidate. First time I went up, trying to think back to when I did door knocking for the DFL, the idea was not to approach people that weren't already identified as DFL. I think the messaging would be more focused on the candidates' issues. You just maybe not go as far as making that last statement of if you're asking them about their interests and your particular candidate you're advocating for supports it you would say "Well you should really, support so and so because they're in line with your ideas"

If you do your general outreach if you still ask these questions they... "all of the candidates have positions on that issue, here's the website if you want to get what it is" I guess that would be the different side.

b. What messaging do you use to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turnout on Election Day?

I think those are the populations where you would spend more time asking about them and their interests. That's probably where I spend my outreaches or voter turnout areas because I think it is really important and crucial for people who don't typically turnout out to vote to see that connection between their life and how voting for a particular candidate could affect things in their life.

It's probably more time consuming, because you do want to probably ask more personal questions and if you get the opportunity to be able to have a connection. Whereas, if you were talking to somebody who was likely to vote it may be more the population that you want to talk to about specific candidates. Try to convince them, you know they're going to go vote but it's more of a conversation of who should you go vote for.

5. What other methods have you used to encourage people to vote? In other words, how do you mobilize voters?

I think it's getting information to them in different ways, there's messaging when you're speaking to them, but making sure that it's visible. If it's getting people to the polls, you want to make sure that in spaces in the neighborhoods and communities that may not have a large voter turnout that maybe get information on billboards or signs or posters or websites or those types of things. I think the more it's visible that it is Election Day. Election Day is coming up. I think also in addition to that getting more conversations to happen around Election Day.

a. How have your methods differed when encouraging turnout vs persuading voters to support a specific candidate or issue?

I would say yeah, difference between issue versus just a reminder to go vote? For me it's more issue than candidates so I try to speak to that. You do enter into more of what are your thoughts on health care or whatever the issue is. Being able to engage in that conversation with them. If it's more of a voting day ask, the method is just simple. More of the logistical type questions, making sure they know where to go vote, if they need help registering.

b. What methods have you used to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turn out on Election Day?

I think with students, the important piece is the number of heavy multiple touch points for students to go vote. I think that is the big key. So it's not just getting them to sign a pledge. They need to see a flyer or get an email or have a conversation with a friend or whatever it might be. I think having many touch points with a particular student is going to increase their likelihood to go vote. I think that's an important piece and I think just with students or any population that isn't more likely to go vote or have low voter turnout it does again get back to the self-interest piece of it and trying to figure out how to have those conversations where they can start talking about themselves and their lives and their challenges and being able to connect those issues that candidates are discussing and how that might impact that person.

6. How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?

I think one of the methods with college students is if you want to maybe have an event, I'll give you a specific example, say you were doing a panel discussion with the different candidates on a campus. Really encouraging the students that are already engaged and their leaders on the campus to really leverage their networks, they should be wanting to get turnout to an event and talking with their friends so yeah I think definitely I've done that. That's an important thing to do.

7. What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?

I think I would say friends. I think it also depends on the demographic or populations you're talking about, but I think a lot of people want to be, especially young voters, want to be doing what their friends are doing so that's a big influence. If you are among a group of individuals who are engaged and planning to go vote you're probably more likely to do the same. If you're among a group that isn't you know it will be more challenging for you to kind of step away from that group to do something different and go vote. So that's probably I would say the kind of main social friend network.

8. In what ways have you relied on influencers or “opinion leaders” (i.e. media, influential community members, etc.) to help encourage individuals to vote?

Sure. Well I would say for college campuses I would categorize professors as your influencers so that would be something that I’d leverage to try to encourage more professors to talk to their students about voting. Maybe even get into their classrooms to talk to them about it. So that’s one example.

I think that community leaders, I mean I’ve worked with community leaders that have a lot of people look up to in the community. I think that, I don’t know if I personally use them in my tactics, but I just witness the influence of the community leaders, being able to really persuade others that know of that through communication.

9. To what extent would you say you have relied on “indirect mobilization” (i.e. people you’ve contacted, encouraging others to vote) in your voter mobilization efforts?

I don’t think I used it very much when I was working in North Minneapolis doing whatever outreach there, but on college campuses it’s relying on students that are engaged and planning to vote and leaders with organizations really heavily relying on their interactions with other people. That’s almost entirely what we rely on. So it’s not me personally going out and talking with students, it’s talking with other people to go talk to other people.

10. How have you established contacts in and built relationships with communities (social networks) you had no prior relationship with?

Well when I did my first get out the vote work with Neighborhoods Organizing for Change I didn’t have any relationship really with north Minneapolis. Well I shouldn’t say none, but very limited and it’s really through doing the calling and door knocking that I developed relationships.

I definitely have a very strong relationship in the community now. I got to know quite a few people that live in the area and that’s through doing this exact type of work. Just having conversations with people and also with others in the community that were doing the same work I was doing. Phone banking and door knocking and volunteering, building those relationships. Then of course there is college campuses. Not living in the districts where the college campuses definitely requires developing relationships with people on campus and other students in the area.

11. How have you leveraged online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to encourage individuals to vote?

I’m not the best at doing social media that would encourage people to vote, but for me, I think it’s about communicating with the students on campuses that are leading the efforts. Using that as a method to get information to them and make sure they have the resources they need to inform students properly about what they need in order to vote. Then of course just

personally putting out messages to my own social networks about going to vote as well but, that's probably the extent of it.

12. If there was one piece of advice you could give to someone looking to encourage people to vote, what would it be?

Be patient and try not to get discouraged. There's really no shortcuts to the work. You have to have boots on the ground for this type of work. Making the calls, doing the door knocking you're going to be talking with a lot of different people. There are going to be plenty that don't have any interest in what you're saying and that's okay. You want to try to just focus on those that seem to be interested or ones that you think you could have a good conversation with about it. So not really dwell on others. I think that's probably the biggest thing. I think that's why a lot of people might not want to do it because it seems like "I don't want to get hung up on all the time," "I don't want to get the door slammed in my face," "I don't want all that type of stuff," but it's actually much more rare than people think. So yeah, don't get discouraged.

Name: Troy Olson

Positions: 2014 Obermueller for Congress Field Organizer and Independent Political Consultant.

1. Briefly describe the roles you are/have been in that involved encouraging people to vote.

The first time I had to encourage people to vote was just as a 19-year old person volunteering for John Kerry for president. It was just the classic volunteer door knocking experience. That was very brief. I did some meetings there and it was mostly people preaching to the choir. My first, more substantial experience was 4 years later volunteering and working for Obama in the primary campaign in Minnesota, North Dakota and Iowa. That was mostly door knocking, some phone banking, mostly persuasion rather than base turnout. 2014 midterm congressional campaign, field organizer. Then just after that worked as an independent consultant for a school board endorsement race.

2. In your professional opinion, why do you think people ultimately vote?

I think most of politics is a rather personal experience. They have some sort of personal connection and it might be small, but it needs to be with the candidate or someone close to them that they trust so they can transfer that personal experience to that person that they trust, maybe your ten closest friends. If you personally care about a candidate, if you feel strongly about a cause, you can probably get your ten closest friends to do it too. Not because they feel the same way, but because they care about you and they are doing it for you. So those are the two ways people are brought into the political process.

Anything beyond that I think is a less personal way to get people to vote and is only successful in high volume campaigns like the presidential election. A certain amount of people will just go and casually vote and then they don't show up in midterms or see the elections and it's a lot diminishing turnouts after that.

3. Alternatively, why do you think people choose not to vote?

Kind of the inverse of all politics is personal. They don't have the personal connection to that candidate or to anyone who cares about it in their wheelhouse. It's not that they don't care. They might care about something, but they have at some point encountered a reason not to care or a reason that it doesn't matter. It's pretty easy to get frustrated with the political process in this country and people will convince themselves and even high information voters will convince themselves that it doesn't make a difference. Personal reasons brought someone into it. Personal reasons might talk someone out of it. Usually has to do with dissatisfaction with the political system and the leadership and the country. Whether that's fair or accurate, those are the reasons.

4. What types of messaging have you used to encourage people to vote?

They always say social pressure is the most effective way to get people to go vote and I guess studies have shown that's effective. In my personal experience, I find that it's not so much the

social pressure. I don't feel that works as much. I feel like everyone is motivated by a certain amount of things and you have to reach those kind of. I've shown you the visual representation of this, of all the things that voter A is interested in all the things that you are interested in and whether it's you or it's the candidate, you can find that sort of circle and find those things in common. It's commonalities that get people attached to a candidate or cause. Whether it's around an issue or it's more personality based. That's why charismatic candidates who have optimistic and hopeful personalities often do better than candidates who are cynical and kind of curmudgeonly. You know everyone wants to volunteer for a candidate that is exciting or more encouraged to vote for that candidate.

a. How does this messaging differ from that messaging used to persuade individuals to support a specific candidate or issue?

I'll start at the latter one. The messaging for people to go and vote is that they probably have done it before and if they haven't done it before we're probably not going to be there. We're talking about get out the vote operations. At that point you're not really focused on bringing new people into the process anymore, because you're in the eleventh hour and you need to get your base to turnout. So you're focusing on your base to turn out, but even that isn't your focus. You're getting even narrower than that in the last weeks or so. You're focusing on maybe your base that doesn't turn out in that specific election. They do turn out generally every four years, but maybe not every two years. So you're focusing on that universe and you're persuading them to just go out and vote. With the idea that if they go out to vote they will probably fall into your camp because they have a history of voting for this party or that party, but the problem is just that motivation to go out and vote hasn't been there as much.

And now getting to the persuasion piece, I think the persuasion piece is sort of less in the final weeks and more about over the course of the campaign and that centers around sort of the campaign's message and how well they're able to cultivate sort of a brand around their candidacy. Then I think the most intimate and personal way to do that is through the field. You're going to get a certain amount of people that will always vote Democrat and always vote Republican and there's about 20-25% that's kind of persuadable one way or another between those two parties. You want to be talking to those people, the persuadable universe, and some people will say that universe is bigger. Maybe it's a third and if you look at the country, one third is Democrat, one third is Republican give or take and then one third is Independent now. But then I think a lot of those Independents you can put into one category or the other and they're just sort of stubborn about being Democrats or Republicans. They just want to seem like they're independent minded maybe, but they are actually very partisan. Some of the most partisan people I've ever run into are Independent. Really when you get down to it there's a persuadable universe of about 20% maybe in a certain year, 25% now. But I think if anything, that persuadable universe is getting smaller. You've seen that reflected

in the nature of our recent elections in terms of how few undecided voters there are. I believe in the last presidential election it was really down to like 10, 15 percent really between Romney and Obama. So that's even more of a specific universe of persuadable universe that you're getting to. They're going to see the most attention. The most money will be spent on their vote. Whether it's an air campaign with ads in the positive or negative variety, whether it's the campaign committee or the independent expenditure, 501 independent political action committee that campaign ad and that's where you see most of your negative ads. So you know that persuasion universe is going to be a lot smaller.

b. What messaging do you use to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turnout on Election Day?

I try to hit them on issues that I feel will be personal to them. If you're talking about a student, they deal with student loans. I know that from my friends' experience and from my own personal experience so I use that as a window to their life. Not like in a creepy way, but in a sort of I understand you sort of way, solidarity sort of way. Student loans, you've got to have a lot of student loans, that's got to be bothersome to you and then I hear them talking about that. Then I say, well here's where candidate A and candidate B are on those issues and this candidate isn't your friend on this issue and maybe it's about tuition. I find some sort of in, and it's not guaranteed that they're going to care about student loans, even if they have student loans but it's your best bet.

Ideally though I like to leave it open ended and to get them to talk first. What issues do you care about? And I say that, whether they're decided or not. If they're decided, I write it down just to make it more personable. They told me they're going to vote for candidate A, but I don't want to treat this endeavor like it's a means to an end. I get them to try to name an issue to see what's motivating our base to turnout for this party or for this candidate so it's good to know that too. That's sort of the first part of the conversation when I talk to the undecided or persuadable voter. Another key part too, is are you plan on voting this year? And you want to hear yes, but even if you hear no, I try to move to the issue, because maybe I can find the issue to make that no a maybe or a yes. If there's an issue that does grab them personally, I then move to that issue. They can be talking about that issue and they can tell me their frustrations or what's going on and it might be very personal. If they can get into that territory, that's actually a good thing. If everyone's comfortable talking about certain things, you basically leave it at whatever they're comfortable telling you. You respond to that and you make it responsive. It's really just sales in general. You want to get them talking most of the time, you don't want to waste that time that you actually connected with someone at a door with contacts, whether it's on the phone or, preferably, at the door. You need to take advantage of that time they are up for having a conversation, because direct mail

pieces are not going to be that successful. You can cover a lot of volume but they're not going to be that successful.

And attack ads on TV, positive or negative— honestly I think they're the new version of lawn signs. You have to do them to show you have a presence and to show you're for real, but I don't think 30-second ads persuade people.

5. What other methods have you used to encourage people to vote? In other words, how do you mobilize voters?

Social media just very lightly. I would say I used social media a lot more back in 08' for Obama. I used it as a key tool to grow the network, but also to talk to people that were friends on Facebook because I thought that was very important for that campaign. I feel it's just less important now. I feel like social media has kind of become the new digital version of Fox news and MSNBC in that it's just a reinforcing agent for what people already believe and it's just preaching to the choir. It's not getting new people to turn up and vote. It's not getting people to change their mind.

In addition, I reach them directly. Preferably in person and if not in person, then on the phone. Realistically, within the campaign I can't do this myself so I need to train people to be doing what I'm doing, I need to multiply the process and build capacity. The best version of that is finding those people. Quantity is great, but absent of that you want quality.

Five quality people who are willing to door knock every X, Y and Z date are better than twenty people that do it wrong or don't do it well or sort of get poorly trained so there's not a lot of investment in them as people and they're treated as sort of a means to an end. "Oh I need this shift filled" and "I'm going to get this person to do it and I'm going to tell them anything about it or rather they've been doing this all the time and it's not important to tell them the way we're trying to do it in this campaign". They say, "oh I've got this, I've done this a lot and I'm just going to go out there and do it" and I think you get a lot of poorly filled out packets and a lot of crooked numbers that way. I think central parties really focus on attempts, when they should really focus on the quality of the contacts and actual persuasions and actual contacts that happened rather than you know a hundred attempts and ten contacts. That's a 10% rate. Everyone talks about a 20% rate being really good. I don't think that's very good. I've had times when 50% of the people have answered their door and that's a good day, because that's times I'm in front of a human being talking about the election and that at least gives you a chance to add people to your universe of voters for that candidate.

Direct conversations in person or on the phone and through volunteers because you know I'm very field heavy.

Everything I've described in my experience is the field. There is absolutely a place for communications messaging strategy, that kind of happens early on in the campaign and you set that early on. If you're changing that strategy in the 11th hour that's probably too late. You're

probably better off picking one strategy and just sticking with it and if it's not working, it's probably just not your year. But it's something that needs to be thought of, but it's sort of a different job that's done early on by different people. Although there's some overlap, because you're implementing that strategy or maybe you're doing it in your own way. I'm not going to lie, I've not always followed the campaign's message when I've been at people's doors. But that's usually because I thought the campaign's message wasn't on point for that door and I adjusted it. I guess every time I talk to a voter, I always try to have some sort of icebreaker that has nothing to do with politics really. That's just sort of about them, because that might open them up a little bit and get them talking about their vote plan and who they're going to vote for or if they're going to vote that fall.

a. How have your methods differed when encouraging turnout vs persuading voters to support a specific candidate or issue?

Yeah, I would say persuasion based messaging or getting them to turnout to vote is more about issues. I'm talking about themes and values and issues a lot more and then getting them to turnout to vote is more about just applying the pressure that "we need your vote, can we count on you?" "You never know, it could come down to a very few votes."

I do have a few anecdotes I go to about very close elections that made a lot of difference in people's lives because of this party or that party or this candidate or that candidate. It's kind of cliché to say that every vote counts, but most times it doesn't matter. It's not that close, but for every nine times that it's a blowout, there's that one election where it came down to a handful of votes. If one person in each precinct across the congressional district throws up their hand and says "Oh your votes not going to matter" well that's a couple hundred votes. There have been congressional races that come down to a couple hundred voters.

b. What methods have you used to encourage voters from traditionally low voting populations to turn out on Election Day?

I mean, I try to go the empowerment angle. "This is your best recourse and your best power is your vote." Lower voting populations have the tendency to be lower income and they probably feel frustrated and powerless and the best check on that is using your power to vote them out of office and so maybe it's about voting someone out rather than voting for someone. You don't like what's been going on well then go and vote against the incumbent and if you are the incumbent that's not the strategy you'd want to go with those voters. Actually, you'll see those incumbents or certain political parties, which I won't name, not want to target voters that don't vote as much. They don't have a benefit to having a high voter turnout, because it hurts them. The higher the turnout the more it benefits the other party. So they want to keep the turnout low and then they'll increase all the methods that suppress turnout. There are more than just political

tactics to do that, there are illegal tactics to do that. There are ways to put obstacles in the path of the voter. There are many obstacles that you could put up that have nothing to do with that person, but are just sort of one additional frustration that makes them maybe turned away.

6. How have you leveraged existing social networks (i.e. families, friends, coworkers, organizations) to encourage individuals to vote?

I mean I've done this a lot more for like endorsement campaigns where literally every vote counts, because we're talking about couple hundred people in a room. I can point to instances where a vote mattered or even my own vote mattered in changing something. I leveraged my friendships more than anything or just my personal network or social network.

I feel like leveraging social networks has its limits. I think it works if it's your closest ten friends. I mean when we're talking about our networks, acquaintances are in that, professional acquaintances and personal acquaintances. You only have so many hours in your life and you're only going to know like ten people super well. I feel like those ten people will show up for you. Everyone else you need to still think about that additional reason that they should come out and support candidate A or party A. You still need to treat them not just as your friend or someone you know, but as an actual voter. With your closest friends you can be like "literally, just do this for me." You can just leverage the fact that you're friends and that you would do it for them. It's kind of a quid pro quo; you would do this for them if they ask you to. Even then, you might get people to throw up their hands and say "no I can't, because this candidate doesn't believe in this or that..." and at that point if you value that friendship you just back off and they don't turn out and that's fine. You leverage your personal network but only to a point. You have to have some limits. There's got to be a balance.

7. What types of networks (or relationships) do you feel are most influential in encouraging others to vote?

I really think it is your closest ten friends. I think ultimately the problem with low voter turnout is "Are your ten friends like you or are they different?" And if they're like you, then they're turning out to vote because you're voting. You're not really getting ten more people. Realistically, it's about getting into those low turnout areas and getting one person jazzed up about voting, and then getting them to get ten of their friends. Getting to that is sort of the key, and that's the best way to increase turnout. Getting people to sort of adopt their friends circle, "Hey we've got you on board, but could you go an additional layer of democratic involvement and get ten of your friends who may not have done this before? Did you help them get registered? Did you help get them to turnout? Did you help them visualize their vote plan?" Anyone who does that is far more valuable to the process than someone like me, who in the general election would talk to ten people, who are my friends, who are probably going to vote anyway.

8. In what ways have you relied on influencers or “opinion leaders” (i.e. media, influential community members, etc.) to help encourage individuals to vote?

I have used “opinion leader” to help encourage individuals to vote to the extent that I think it would be effective. I can’t say I’ve thought of the media too much. I don’t think people think too highly of the media these days, but if thought it would work, I might do that. I don’t think endorsements hold a lot of weight either.

I guess I would just go to your friend is doing it, your neighbor is doing it, and neighbor is even further apart because you’re going to know your friend. You might know your neighbor, hopefully you know your neighbor a little bit, but you’re definitely going to know your friend. I’d probably start with friend is for candidate A then I’d go to neighbors for candidate A and then after that I’m going to really let them lead the conversation and react to that because I don’t know what exactly what they’re for. Absent from what I have on the information that they’ve willingly given up in past elections and throughout that cycle, of course and that’s not always accurate. There are times when people just say something because they want to hang up the phone or they want to get done with that door knock, that conversation. There are many reasons to be distrustful or at least not to take it as gospel, the stuff that’s in these networks. It’s more likely to be accurate but not all of it is accurate and so when you have inaccurate information I think it’s more so people just made it up than someone genuinely just changed their mind.

People don’t change their mind a lot, voters and people are generally socialized by 25/30 and switching from one party to the other is much more the kind of longer process or maybe there’s some instigating moment within the country that creates them to change their mind.

I think it’s a lot easier to get people to go vote for something than against something. I think if you want people to vote their hopes and dreams rather than vote their fears. Realistically both do turn out votes and different people use both of those reason to... and even myself, I’ve used voting my fear before over voting my hopes. You’re not always going to get your preferred candidate in that party so it’s about I prefer this party to that party. I don’t think this persons a great candidate... you know only a certain amount of people will go with their party... maybe in that time and even then it’s not a close election and they feel okay doing that. Each person is doing this mental individual calculation. It’s sort of predicting where the economy will go, a lot of science is dedicated to this stuff and you’re going to be looking at that and writing about that. I can only speak to my personal anecdotal experiences and I really feel it’s the drawing the circle around the thing in common. It’s not even between the candidate and the voter, that would be nice but, the candidate just needs to be there if he wants to do that.

You’re better off just going off yourself whether you’re the volunteer or the staffer and going to the voter and just making it personal between you and them. If they trust you, they’ll trust you if you build that relationship, if you sell that. If you’re in sales you’re never persuading someone to buy a house they have already decided to buy the house, you’re persuading them to buy the

house from you. They're already interested in the idea of buying a home and I use this because my dad is in the housing industry. They are already going to buy the home, so it's about they buy it from your company or from you and they're not going to do that if they don't like you.

9. To what extent would you say you have relied on "indirect mobilization" (i.e. people you've contacted, encouraging others to vote) in your voter mobilization efforts?

If I find that person, like I referenced earlier, that I feel is in a friend circle or in an area of the community that isn't turning out to vote and I have a really great connection with them, I always make the pitch and sometimes I just do it generally. When I find that person, I make the pitch to try and get them to step up to the next layer of involvement, to talk to their friends. I don't think I could connect with all of their friends, but I know I connected with them or I'd like to think that I did. So I try to get them to talk to their friends about this and they agree to do it, and there's a way to follow up on that. You get them involved early in the process and that's the best way to do it, because you find basically a super activist in that person and they organize their friend group or their neighborhood and that would be ideal. However, often times, especially in midterms in city elections is not going to be the case.

It's key to find that one person that can then extend to their friends. They talk to their friends, not you. You can, but it's going to be better if it's them, because the relationship is between that voter and their friends, not you and their friends. Their friends don't care about you. Your only hope is independently establishing that connection with them like you did with that first person, but that's not as likely. It's a lot more efficient and a lot more genuine if it's that person who lives amongst them in that neighborhood.

Most people working on campaigns usually don't live in the area they are working in. They might live in the state, they might live nearby, but especially in presidential elections, you have a bunch of people camped out living in the state that they never lived in. They will get to know that area and if they're smart they will hang out in the coffee shop where young people frequent, just to start conversations and they will do their work there. No one should be holed up in a field office too much. Maybe in the early part of the day, but you need to spend half of your time in the community otherwise you're not being visible. Create those conversation starters. That's why in my opinion every field office should be a storefront that people can walk in. Create that walk in traffic.

Like "Hey I saw this speech that Hilary Clinton gave and I really want to..." and then you start that conversation like "Hey, wow that's great, we'd love to...Here's what you could do." "Would you be interested in doing this?" "Well, we'd most prefer that happen because we need that, but then I'll go to this," so that's about doing the "asks." They call them "asks" because that's the general way to do it, you're talking about voters and them going to vote. So that's the "ask" for that voter but there's an "ask" for everything, there's an "ask" for somebody to donate to a political campaign, there's an "ask" for somebody to volunteer to go door knock.

Candidates that have a personality that brings people to them, do better. No one likes the grouch that just stands up there and complains about how poorly the American economy is doing, how poorly this is doing, how poorly that's doing. Mitt Romney didn't win because he could not convince people to vote for him, he could criticize Obama for XYZ but that wasn't enough, it had to be not him or not her plus me. People forget about the plus me a lot and it's weird because it's a fundamentally narcissistic process asking people to vote for you. That's the part that I feel a great field staff or volunteer base actually has an advantage over the candidate because they're asking you to vote for this person and here's why I really like this person and it's personal but it's also not narcissistic or however you want to put it if that's too strong of a word. There's a certain audacity in saying that there's a candidate saying "Oh I would be the best at this and here's why..." and maybe it's not that hard of an "ask" maybe it's just that "I would be better than my opponent" and that's a little bit easier to say.

10. How have you established contacts in and built relationships with communities (social networks) you had no prior relationship with?

Just live in the community, honestly just absolutely get embedded. It's just like being in the military. You're out in the field, you live there, you live out in the field, and you need to live out there. I'd spend one day in an area, and I was told coming in that "if you just go into this area two days a week..." and I knew that was BS. I could have done that and that would have been fine because that's what they asked me, but I knew it had to be everyday otherwise there was no chance of anything happening.

That gets back to what I said earlier about not treating voters or volunteers or anybody as a means to an end. Everybody needs to be a part of the end. That is what democracy is about, everybody doing their part even, if it's just to go out and vote everybody being in this together. There needs to be that initial buy in up front. Why would we ever expect the economy to be built from the middle up instead of the top down, if we don't all "buy in"? We all do better when we all do better, that's the appeal economically, and well it's true democratically too. We all do better when we all do better. The more people that turn out to vote, the more vital and the more informed this democracy will be. You've got to live in the community; you've got to get to know the economy and you've got to care about them. Even if you don't genuinely care, pretend to care. It's a sliding scale of effectiveness. Genuinely care, preferable. Second, pretend to care, and if you don't care well then you shouldn't be working in this job, I don't know why you're doing it, if you don't care and can't pretend to care.

11. How have you leveraged online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to encourage individuals to vote?

Very, very little. Early on a lot more. I think there was a certain heyday for social networks in political campaigns and they're still certainly used big time especially at the high-end level. It's part of your campaign. It's become a whole new part, like television. It's the next wave, like television kind of became a completely unavoidable part of campaigns probably with the 1960's

election, Kennedy versus Nixon. I would say 2008 was that year for the social network. With the internet it was probably a few cycles before, but it was still kind of knowing when to really harness the internet, because there wasn't the social media part to the internet yet, not really. No one had harnessed it in a way for fundraising and organizing and fieldwork the way the Obama campaign did in 2008. Whether it was Facebook or they hired someone off Facebook to create their own social network called MyBarackObama.com, so 08' was kind of the big explosion for social media and politics converging.

I feel from an individual activist standpoint, it's been a law of diminishing returns since that point. I say that because I can only speak as a voter myself or someone who has been on campaigns. I know my friend circle. They're going to already do what I generally do, they're going to mostly agree with me to the extent that I have people in my network (which I do) that vote for a different party or different candidates and that disagree with me. If I'm going to reach them, I'm going to reach them in person and I'm going to make it personal rather than over social media. I can reach them in person. There is no way to account for human emotion over words on a screen. Even if it's just your Facebook friend, I'm very wary doing any sort of ask that isn't just a general shout out to everyone. But even then, I basically moved all of my politics off of Facebook and I would do it on Twitter, because on Twitter it's less of a personal thing. I think it's been a law of diminishing returns since 2008.

It's part of the hierarchy of campaigns just like TV is. You need to have a plan for it. You need to do it cause if you don't do it, it's like not putting up lawn signs or not attending parades.

You need to create that visibility and you need to prove to your volunteer base and your activist base "Hey, we're a real campaign, we're doing stuff" but it's not what is going to move those people that don't always vote, to vote. It's like how no lawn sign ever persuaded anyone to vote. It's all under the umbrella of visibility. It's like Fox News. It's like going to MSNBC. It's a regurgitation of people who agree with one another. No one is really getting persuaded by Fox News and I don't think anyone's getting persuaded by social media anymore either. I think anyone who is going to get persuaded by social media was persuaded long ago and there were probably a lot of other independent factors that helped socialize them into a direction. More likely their experience in college, their experience growing up, staying in town versus going away from their hometown, meeting new friends, whatever. All the things that socialize people in this country and in any country. Those forces took place and social media had a small part in that at one time, but now I think it's just "retweet, retweet, retweet, oh yes I agree, retweet", or it's a bunch of people yelling at one another or agreeing loudly. Yelling at one another on Facebook has never persuaded anyone to vote.

12. If there was one piece of advice you could give to someone looking to encourage people to vote, what would it be?

Find the thing in common between you and the person that you're persuading to vote. Find the commonality and then just hug that, hug that commonality and play in that land.

So let's say the commonality is education. Don't talk about healthcare even though that might be the main part of that candidate's spiel. Talk about education, because they care about education and voting is a very personal experience. The voter goes into that booth and thinks about their life and their future and their family's future. They don't care what the campaign was talking about. They care about what they care about and hopefully the campaign had something in their message that is in that circle, that commonality. If they don't, you have to create that.